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Non-supply of chargesheet copy to accused no ground for bail: SC

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US removes export curbs for key Anthropic AI models

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France scripts history with 5-match 3-goal streak

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | 2 JULY 2026 | THURSDAY | BENGALURU | 16 MUHARRAM 1448 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 171 | Pages: 8

Govt clears B'luru footpaths, vendors bear the brunt

Vendors demand alternative spaces, says livelihood will be hit

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

Earthmovers rolled through Bengaluru on Wednesday as authorities launched a large-scale drive to clear footpath encroachments by street vendors, shopkeepers and unauthorised structures, covering nearly 2,000 km in the first phase.

The operation, coordinated by the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) and five municipal corporations, began at 9.30 am after ward-wise and zone-wise plans were finalised. It was launched across North, South, East, West and Central city corporation limits, with simultaneous action on major roads including Marathahalli, Varthur, ITPL Main Road, Outer Ring Road, Indiranagar, Jayanagar, Koramangala, HSR Layout, JP Nagar, Yelahanka, Hebbal, Banaswadi, Tumakuru Road, Mysuru Road and Rajajinagar among others.

GBA workers remove roadside vendors' belongings during a footpath clearance drive in Bengaluru's Govindaraj Nagar constituency on Wednesday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

The drive commenced in Ward-153 under Bengaluru Central City Corporation, where encroachments from Ashoka Pillar to Madhavan Park were cleared. Earthmovers removed tea stalls, temporary extensions outside shops and construction materials occupying footpaths, with seized goods loaded onto lorries. Police, engineers and civic officials supervised the operation, while additional personnel were deployed following minor objections from affected occupants.

Officials said the "Safe Footpaths Campaign" aims to reclaim pedestrian space and ensure safe, obstruction-free movement, in line with Supreme Court directions that footpaths must remain free for public use.

Urban Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda had held two rounds of meetings and directed that the exercise not be delayed. He said that vending restrictions apply only on about 20 per cent of major roads where pedestrian movement is severely affected.

However, vendors opposed the eviction, saying they had been operating for years and should be provided alternative vending spaces and rehabilitation or else they will lose out on livelihood. Authorities said notices were issued in advance and awareness campaigns conducted before enforcement began. Officials added that the first phase targets about 2,000 km of Bengaluru's nearly 13,000 km network of roads. —*PTI*

Karnataka begins Gruha Jyothi reverification

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

The Karnataka energy department began door-to-door reverification of beneficiaries under the Gruha Jyothi scheme on Wednesday, prompting senior BJP leader R Ashoka to allege that the government was using the exercise to determine eligibility based on income and caste by seeking PAN cards and caste certificates. One of the five guarantee schemes introduced by the Congress government, the Gruha Jyothi scheme provides up to 200 units of free electricity to all households. The scheme, launched in July 2023, is undergoing a verification process. Electricity Supply Companies' meter readers and staff will visit consumers' homes to verify records and collect beneficiary information, the government said on Tuesday. The verification will be completed on-site using a mobile application and a declaration form. —*PTI*

US removes 4 desi firms from Russia sanctions list

WASHINGTON, 1 JULY

The US has de-listed four Indian companies from its sanctions list, which were accused of supplying advanced technology and equipment for Russia's military-industrial base. The companies have been deleted from the Office of Foreign Assets Control's (OFAC) Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (SDN) List. The four companies include Hyderabad-based RRG Engineering Technologies Private Limited and Lokesh Machines Limited, Ahmedabad-based Galaxy Bearings and New Delhi-based Shaurya Aeronautics Private Limited, according to details shared by the US Department of the Treasury on Tuesday. —*PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 7

IndiGo starts cheaper fares for flyers with only cabin luggage

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

IndiGo has introduced IndiGo Lite, a new entry-level fare category for Economy Class passengers travelling with cabin baggage only on direct domestic and international flights.

Available for travel from 15 July, the new fare offers the lowest base price among the airline's fare options. Bookings opened on 1 July through IndiGo's direct channels.

Passengers opting for IndiGo Lite will receive an automatically assigned seat at no extra cost and can carry one cabin bag weighing up to 7kg, but will not have checked baggage included. With the launch, IndiGo joins Air India Express in offering cabin baggage-only fares across its network of more than 2,100 daily flights. —*PTI*

ATF, commercial & LPG prices cut; no relief for domestic LPG

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) and commercial LPG prices were cut on Wednesday as easing tensions in West Asia pulled down international oil prices.

ATF prices were reduced by about Rs 5 per litre, bringing the price in Delhi to around Rs 110 per litre, industry sources said, adding that the price is for domestic airlines.

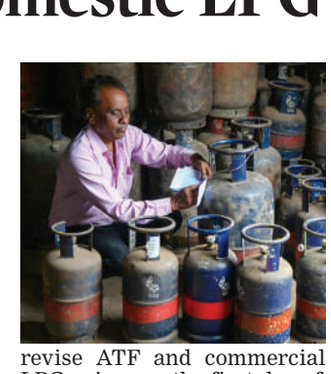
Oil marketing companies also cut the price of commercial LPG by Rs 183.50 per 19-kg cylinder, the first reduction this year.

Commercial LPG will now cost Rs 2,930 per cylinder after touching a record Rs 3,113 last month as geopolitical tensions pushed up crude oil prices.

Alongside, the 5-kg marked-priced or Free Trade LPG (FTL) cylinder cost was also reduced by Rs 13 to Rs 808.50 per 5-kg cylinder.

Prices of domestic 14.2-kg LPG cylinders were left unchanged at Rs 942.

State-owned fuel retailers



revise ATF and commercial LPG prices on the first day of every month based on the average international benchmark price in the preceding month and foreign exchange rates.

State-owned Indian Oil Corp (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL), which together account for more than 90 per cent of India's fuel retail market, left prices unchanged.

In Delhi, IOC continues to sell petrol at Rs 102.12 per litre and diesel at Rs 95.20 per litre. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 7

Ship runs aground in Hormuz as Iran insists on controlling Strait

DUBAI, 1 JULY

A ship ran aground in the Strait of Hormuz while using a route not approved by Iran, state television in Tehran reported Wednesday. The vessel was identified as a foreign container ship, with no other details.

Iranian state TV on Wednesday said the ship "ran aground with its cargo because of shallow waters along the route it had chosen and was unable to continue sailing." It said shippers needed to follow the instructions of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in the strait.

The Guard's navy "has repeatedly warned captains, shipowners and officials of shipping companies around the world that any entry or exit through routes other than the Route of Authority' in the Persian Gulf could lead to irreparable incidents," it said.

Iran has used its ability to choke off the waterway as a key source of leverage since the war began, disrupting global markets for energy and other critical goods.

Iran and the United States agreed as part of an interim deal to allow ships to pass uncharged for 60 days, but Tehran insisted it must control the routes of the vessels and later charge fees for passage, upending decades of practice in the waterway. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

TN moves SC against HC order on cow slaughter ban

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Tamil Nadu has moved the Supreme Court against a Madras High Court order imposing a blanket ban on the slaughter of cows and calves in the state.

The plea challenges the High Court's 27 May order directing the chief secretary and DGP to ensure no cow or calf was slaughtered on Bakrid or any other day, based on a 1976 order aimed at protecting milk production and the rural economy.

Tamil Nadu called the order contrary to the Tamil Nadu Animal Preservation Act, 1958, which permits slaughter of cows over 10-years-old that are unfit for work or breeding.

The High Court order came on a PIL by K Surya Prasanth of the Hindu Makkal Katchi, who had sought slaughter be restricted to designated places. —*PTI*

NEW RULES FROM 1 JULY

1 July brings several financial changes that will affect the common man.

HERE'S A LOOK AT THE CHANGES

VB G RAM G
The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act, 2025, came into force on Wednesday, with the govt saying the law will provide eligible rural households a statutory entitlement to 125 days of guaranteed wage employment. The average wage has now increased from Rs 298.8 per day under MGNREGA to Rs 327.4 per day, in an average increase of Rs 28.6 per day.

AADHAAR EMAIL UPDATE IS NOW FREE
Updating your email address linked to your Aadhaar on the UIDAI App is free of cost from 1 July to 31 December. The Rs 75 fee has been waived off.

PASSPORT FEE TO INCREASE
Passport services are more expensive. Standard 36-page passports now cost ₹2,500 (up from ₹1,500), while 60-page passports cost ₹3,500 (up from ₹2,000).

NEW CONSUMER PROTECTION RULES
The Reserve Bank of India has implemented new anti-mis-selling regulations, allowing customers to get full refunds if a bank misleads them into buying financial products.

ITR FILING DEADLINE
The last date to file Income Tax Returns (ITR-1 and ITR-2) without late fees is 31 July. Taxpayers missing this deadline can face penalties up to Rs 5,000.

EPFO SERVICES
The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation has resumed online services following a scheduled 5-day system migration and database upgrade.

TICKETLESS TRAVEL
The minimum penalty for ticketless travel has been increased to Rs 500 plus the fare, up from Rs 250.

IND FUMES AS PAK DEMOLISHES 125-YEAR-OLD GURUDWARA

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

India on Wednesday reported the demolition of an old gurudwara in Pakistan as "deeply distressing" and said it strongly condemns this "targeted act of vandalism", as it called upon Islamabad to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The MEA said, "We have seen the deeply distressing reports regarding the demolition of the historic 125-year-old sacred Gurudwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Sahib in Farooqabad, Pakistan. We strongly condemn this highly deplorable and targeted act of vandalism against a revered Sikh shrine."

MEA called for the demolished portions to be restored and flagged the lack of action by authorities as deeply concerning. "The systemic targeting of religious minorities in Pakistan continues unabated," the MEA said, urging Pakistan to protect minorities. —*PTI*

Blocking Indus threatens nuke Armageddon: Bilawal *>>More on Pg 6*

FAIRYTALE RETURN DENIED

Serena Williams' first Wimbledon singles match in four years ended in defeat to 20-year-old Australian Maya Joint, with a knee scare adding to the disappointment —*PTI* *>>>MORE ON PAGE 8*

TAKAICHI REACHES INDIA, EYES RUPEE-YEN TRADE

NEW DELHI, 30 JUNE

According to a Nikkei Asia report, India and Japan are set to advance plans for a local-currency settlement framework that would allow direct yen-rupee transactions for bilateral trade and reduce reliance on the US dollar.

This would be the first-time currency cooperation has been formally incorporated into a leaders' joint statement between the two countries, Nikkei reported.

Boosting economic ties, enhancing resilient supply chains for semiconductors and firming up cooperation on artificial intelligence are set to be the focus of the three-day visit

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi —*WIKIPEDIA*

by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's to India.

The prime ministers will hold summit talks on 2 July in New Delhi, and Takaichi will attend a joint economic forum. Following summit talks, the two sides would unveil a joint declaration on economic security cooperation and a joint statement on cooperation in AI. It is also expected to deliberate extensively on ways to boost cooperation on critical minerals and pharmaceuticals, said sources close to the situation

As the two countries approach the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2027, cooperation continues to deepen across a wide range of sectors, including trade and investment, economic security, defence and security, science and technology, culture, and people-to-people ties. The bilateral framework now comprises over 70 dialogue mechanisms. —*PTI*

FLAGS SECURITY LAPSES

Govt asks Meta to halt WhatsApp username rollout

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The Centre has issued a notice to Meta over the planned rollout of WhatsApp's "usernames" feature in India, directing it to provide a detailed explanation within three days and withholding approval for launch until consultations are completed, sources said on Wednesday.

Officials have also asked Meta not to proceed with the rollout pending review of privacy and security concerns, particularly the risk of impersonation and misuse.

Under the proposed feature, WhatsApp users will be able to create a unique username prefixed with "@", which can be used to message or call others without sharing phone numbers. Usernames will be distinct from display names and must be unique, while certain handles may be reserved for businesses, governments and public figures. Meta has said

users interacting in groups or chats will see usernames by default when numbers are not saved.

The feature is intended to enhance privacy, especially in group interactions and with unknown contacts, and allows users to reserve usernames ahead of full rollout. WhatsApp has around 500 million users in India, making it a key market.

However, government sources said the feature could enable impersonation by allowing users to create handles resembling official agencies or individuals, raising public safety concerns. Authorities are exploring legal mechanisms to regulate or potentially block the feature.

Cybersecurity experts, startup founders and industry voices have also flagged risks of fraud and identity confusion. Paytm CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma warned that lookalike usernames could become a major scam vector, while KnotDating CEO Jasveer Singh emphasised the need for both privacy and accountability. —*PTI*

In a 1st, scientists create cells in lab that mimic life functions

SAINT PAUL, 1 JULY

Researchers at the University of Minnesota have created synthetic cells containing lab-made DNA that can perform several basic functions of life, including feeding, growing and multiplying in a laboratory dish.

The team developed tiny water-filled spheres, dubbed SpudCells, by adding a small amount of synthetic DNA rather than modifying natural cells. While the artificial cells are less robust and efficient than natural ones, the team described them as a proof of principle that molecules can recreate behaviours previously associated only with living cells. The researchers say the synthetic cells may be the first to demonstrate the complete cell cycle of growth, genetic replication and reproduction. In the future, they could be engineered to perform specific tasks such as producing food, medicines or fuel. The breakthrough could also help scientists better understand how non-living chemicals gave rise to life itself. —*Salar News*

Chamundi Ashada Friday spl darshan to cost Rs 2,000

MYSURU, 1 JULY

The State government has introduced a Rs 2,000 special darshan ticket for devotees visiting the Sri Chamundeshwari Temple atop Chamundi Hills during the Ashada Fridays, replacing the earlier Rs 300 ticket to regulate the heavy rush. Mysuru district in-charge Minister Yathindra Siddaramaiah said over 2 lakh devotees are expected every Friday and weekends between 17 July and 7 August. He said VVIPs will be allowed to take darshan only between 5.30am to 10.30am. All arrangements will also be made for devotees to take free darshan. Police were instructed to ban all private vehicles to prevent traffic jams. Instead, authorities will extended free KSRTC bus services. The four Ashada Fridays fall on 17, 24, 31 July and 7 August. Chamundeshwari Vardhanotsava is on 4 August. *—SALAR NEWS*

How can SIR be both illegal & basis for welfare: BJP

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

If the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is illegitimate, how can Chief Minister DK Shivakumar say that only voters who remain on the rolls be eligible for the welfare schemes, asked BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya on Wednesday. Malviya posted on X that Shivakumar's remarks showed the Congress' "hypocrisy" and alleged that objection to the intensive revision of electoral rolls was "not driven by principles but politics". Malviya said the Congress "cannot have it both ways", alleging that while Congress leader Rahul Gandhi calls the SIR a "citizenship test" and attacks it as unconstitutional, the Karnataka government is relying on it to decide the distribution of welfare schemes. *—PTI*

—SALAR

Karnataka's 'Snake Anees' dies at age 55

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

Mohammed Anees, a revered wildlife rescuer and conservationist in Karnataka, passed away in a city hospital on Tuesday at age 55. Affectionately known as "Snake Anees," he began rescuing snakes at the age of 17 and went on to dedicate his life to protecting nature and rescuing snakes. With decades of experience, he rescued thousands of venomous and non-venomous snakes. His TV appearances on Discovery, Animal Planet, and National Geographic, combined with his mentorship, inspired generations. He believed that every creature deserved protection, and that a true rescuer never needs to harm a snake. Anees is survived by his wife, Tayiba, and their children, Shoaib and Simrah. His funeral will be held on Thursday afternoon at Khadria Masjid, Miller Road. *—AGENCIES*

State govt begins Gruha Jyothi reverification drive

BJP asks why PAN, caste is being verified

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

The Karnataka Energy Department began door-to-door verification of beneficiaries under the Gruha Jyothi scheme on Wednesday. One of the five guarantee schemes introduced by the Congress government, the scheme provides up to 200 units of free electricity to all households.

It is undergoing a reverification drive after Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that the government had received reports of misuse of the scheme. He said that several commercial establishments were taking advantage of it. He also said that some people had registered multiple electricity meters in their name or the Gruha Jyothi scheme

The verification drive is being carried out across the jurisdictions of BESCOM, MESCOM, HESCOM, GESCOM and CESC.

The Energy Department has requested beneficiaries to keep the required documents ready for verification, including their Aadhaar card (for verification only), passport-size photograph, voter ID card, PAN card, tenancy or rental agreement (where applicable), ration card and caste certificate. The Department said the verification can only be completed through an on-site visit by meter readers and urged all consumers and beneficiaries to cooperate with the visiting staff to ensure a smooth and timely completion of the exercise.

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited
Gruha Jyothi Scheme
Document Verification and Application Submission at Your Doorstep
BESCOM meter readers will visit your home to verify Gruha Jyothi Scheme beneficiaries.
Kindly extend your cooperation to help file the verification process smoothly
Please keep the following documents ready:
Aadhaar Card
Voter ID
Ration Card
Pan Card
Passport Size Photo
Caste Certificate (if applicable)
Rent Agreement (if applicable)
Eligible beneficiaries will continue to receive the benefits of the Gruha Jyothi Scheme

The government asked people to keep their Aadhaar card, voter ID, ration card, PAN card, caste certificate, rent agreement and a passport size photo ready *—X @NAMMABESCOM*

However, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly asked why the government was using the exercise to determine eligibility based on income and caste by seeking PAN cards and caste certificates.

He alleged that the government was doing a U-turn as it was unable to sustain its guarantee schemes and cut off poor and middle-class people from the scheme's benefits.

"For Gruha Jyothi verification, a voter ID is enough. Why is a PAN card required? Why is a caste certificate required?" the BJP leader asked on X.

"To hide the fact that the State Treasury is completely bankrupt, the government has now devised a new plan of conducting door-to-door verification to reduce the number of beneficiaries under the Gruha Jyothi scheme," he added.

"Before the elections, in your eagerness to come to power, you promised 200 units of free electricity for everyone without any conditions. Now, why are you trying to determine eligibility based on income and caste? What kind of 'guarantee' is this?" he asked Shivakumar. "By asking for a PAN card and caste certificate, whom are you planning to exclude from the scheme?". *—Agencies*

DISTS GET ₹5CR FOR DRINKING WATER

State preparing drought action plan: Parameshwara

BELAGAVI, 1 JULY

Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara on Wednesday said the State government has prepared an action plan to tackle a possible drought due to deficient rainfall and earmarked Rs 5 crore for each district to ensure an adequate supply of drinking water.

He warned that the situation could become "precarious" if rainfall remains persists into July.

He said that nearly all reservoirs in the State have reached the 'dead storage' levels due to poor rainfall.

Parameshwara chaired a review meeting with Deputy Commissioners, Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officers and Assistant Commissioners of the seven districts in the Belagavi division.

He said drought-like conditions were emerging in Belagavi district. However, there were technical considerations that had to be taken into account before declaring a district as drought hit, he added. "We are monitoring the situation regularly".

However, he said that the Centre was unlikely to really help, noting that the funds released under the National Disaster Response Fund are lower than the State's demands every year.

WARNS FARMERS

Pointing out that it was too early to assess crop losses as sowing had not commenced in many places, he said the situation would depend on the rainfall in July and if late sowing is possible. "If there is no rainfall in July and late sowing cannot be taken up, the situation will become precarious".

He added that cloud seeding was not under consideration now. *—PTI*

A water tank being filled on Kasturba Road in Bengaluru, on Wednesday. *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

> **If sufficient rainfall does not occur in the coming days, the situation could become one we have never faced before. The government has discussed precautionary measures, prepared an action plan and issued directions to ensure an adequate supply of drinking water**
>
> -G Parameshwara, Deputy Chief Minister

3 killed, 3 rescued in Mangaluru landslide

MANGALURU, 1 JULY

A rain-triggered landslide destroyed a house here in the early hours of Wednesday, killing three members of a family, while three others were rescued, NDRF officials said.

The incident occurred in the Nagori area of Mangaluru following heavy overnight rainfall that triggered a landslide, burying the house under a mound of earth.

According to officials, the family was trapped beneath the debris when the house collapsed. Residents, personnel from the Fire and Emergency Services, and other rescue teams rushed to the spot and launched an operation to extricate the victims.

The deceased were Shanta, 46, her eight-year-old daughter Anamika Chaurasia, and four-year-old daughter Pari.

Three others, Balkrishna, 48, Alka, 14, and Anusha, 11, were rescued alive and shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment, officials said.

The family, originally from Bihar, had lived in Kankanady for two decades. Officials said heavy rain caused a landslide from the hill above, collapsing the house.

NDRF joined the rescue operation, and the bodies of all three victims were later recovered from the debris. The administration has urged residents in hilly, landslide-prone areas to stay alert amid continuing heavy rain and has begun assessing whether the surrounding area is safe to live. *— PTI*

The landslide following heavy rains burried a house in Mangaluru, killing a woman and her two daughters, aged eight and four, on Wednesday *—ANI*

Dakshina Kannada kids get holiday today due to rains

DAKSHINA KANNADA, 1 JULY

All schools, Anganwadi centres and PUCs and colleges in Dakshina Kannada will be closed on Thursday after the India Meteorological Department warned of heavy rainfall in the district and issued a Red Alert.

Students have advised not to visit waterbodies, and the public was told to avoid dilapidated buildings or electricity poles, according to the Deputy Commissioner's order. Strong winds are also expected along the seashore and riverbanks.

The district has been receiving heavy rainfall over the past two days, leading to waterlogging in low lying areas. *—Salar News*

HC upholds UAPA charge against US Christian org

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday dismissed a petition seeking to quash a UAPA case against five people allegedly linked to US-based Christian missionary organisation. The Timothy Initiative is accused of illegally withdrawing nearly Rs 100 crore to fund Maoist activities in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

Rejecting petitioner Micah Mark's plea, Justice M Nagaprasanna said, "One of the gravest threats to national security... is the clandestine funding of extremism."

He observed that funding acts as the "oxygen" sustaining extremist movements and said investigation into such allegations was imperative. "The courts must be circumspect in stifling investigation," he added.

The Enforcement Directorate alleged the accused illegally used foreign debit cards to withdraw Rs 92.55 crore between November 2025 and April 2026 in violation of FEMA and FCRA. Mark was allegedly found carrying 24 foreign debit cards, while suspicious withdrawals of about Rs 6.34 crore were traced to Left Wing Extremism-affected areas in Chhattisgarh. *—PTI*

Ethanol blending an unvetted experiment on 3.6cr Indians: Priyank

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Wednesday criticised the Centre over the Ethanol Blended Petrol (E20), alleging that the Union government had made "3.6 crore Indians part of an experiment" by rolling out ethanol-blended fuel without adequate evidence, public consultation or consensus.

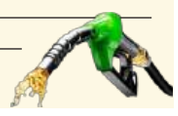
Citing the Centre's submissions before the Supreme Court on Tuesday, Priyank claimed the government had admitted that the impact of ethanol blending was still being assessed.

"A few days back, (Union Road and Transport Minister) Nitin Gadkari openly challenged saying, "Show me one vehicle anywhere in the world which had problems because of E20 petrol.' Now, the Centre told the Supreme Court that 'Ethanol mixing is an experiment--results will come by next year," the IT/BT Minister stated on X. Priyank demanded that the Centre immediately rolled back the E20 until it was provably safe.

"You cannot challenge citizens to prove damage when your own data is still pending," he charged. "People are not guinea pigs." *—ANI*

WHY IT MATTERS: HM

- 9 out of 10 vehicles (3.6 crore) are not compatible with E20.
- Mileage is plummeting.
- Engines are getting bust, spiking repair bills.



BJP's GBA in-charge met ex-Pak ISI officer: BKH

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

State Congress President BK Hariprasad on Wednesday questioned the reported meetings between BJP leader Ram Madhav and a retired Pakistani ISI Major General.

"We are mentioning Madhav because he is the BJP's in-charge for the upcoming Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) elections in August," Hariprasad told press. "What was the purpose of going to Colombo and talking to the ISI in the context of the GBA elections?"

He claimed that Mahadev also met the retired ISI general in London just two months before Operation Sindoor.

"These people went to Pakistan, ate biryani, and then left. They (Centre) said none of our soldiers died in Operation Sindoor. But the other day, (Union Defence Minister) Rajnath Singh paid tribute, saying six soldiers had died," he charged.

Madhav has already rejected the allegation, saying that he was invited to speak at a dialogue after which he left. *—Salar News*

BMRCL to probe Metro disruptions, says Tejasvi Surya

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya on Wednesday said Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety Janak Kumar Garg had directed the BMRCL to investigate service disruptions over the past three years and submit a report on the corrective measures.

The development comes after Surya wrote to the commissioner on 23 June, highlighting the need for safety and accountability in Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) operations following the disruption of Metro services on the Purple Line.

Surya posted an exchange of letters between the two on his X in which Garg advised the BMRCL to conduct an audit of the effectiveness of the operational and maintenance aspects of the Metro railway system.

"This is no longer about isolated technical failures. The repeated disruptions raise serious concerns about the safety, reliability, and maintenance standards of Bengaluru's Metro system. Passenger safety and convenience must be BMRCL's highest priority, not an afterthought," Surya said, according to a release.

He urged the State government and BMRCL to treat the nearly 20 service disruptions since January 2024 as a wake-up call. *—Salar News*

Citing videos of 'drunk DKS', CM warns against fake news

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday called for a "principled and professional" approach to journalism to tackle the extremely challenging task of warding against fake news.

"During the Mekedatu padayatra the media had highlighted an instance of an exhausted me being jostled around by fellow walkers as 'walking after having consumed alcohol'. That was a deliberate attempt to give people a false message," Shivakumar said after inaugurating the Press Day celebration programme organised by the Karnataka Media Academy and the Karnataka Working Journalists' Association at Gandhi Bhavan.

Similarly, he said that media had reported that he was admitted to a hospital when he had just gone for a routine check-up, calling it "fake news".

"If I make a mistake, expose it. But don't publish false news," he advised, adding that abiding by journalistic ethics helps society. *—Salar News*

Information Commissioner MN Anucheth, Karnataka Media Academy President Ayesha Khanum, CM DK Shivakumar and Telangana Media Academy President Srinivas Reddy during Press Day, in City *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

PROBE ON

City daycare workers spray toilet water in toddlers' mouths

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

Police have registered an FIR against five employees of a daycare centre inside an IT company campus for allegedly physically abusing toddlers, officials said Wednesday.

The alleged abuse reportedly occurred at Capgemini's HAL campus, where IT company employees leave their toddlers while at work. The matter surfaced Monday after videos of the abuse circulated on WhatsApp and were reported to the Child Helpline.

Police said the videos showed caregivers threatening toddlers aged two to three when they cried or caused disturbances. The complaint alleged the women placed children inside a front-loading washing machine, forced them to sit on Western-style toilets, sprayed water into their mouths using a toilet jet, locked them in bathrooms, and threatened them into silence.

A senior police officer said a case has been registered against the five women under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act. The accused are being questioned, while police verify the videos' authenticity and determine when the incidents occurred and whether other children were also abused.

No arrests have been made so far, and the investigation is ongoing, police said. *—PTI*

The incident occured on Monday and the videos have since gone viral *—SCREENGRAB*

Gym sealed after owner's arrest over Ram temple post

BALLIA, 1 JULY

The Ballia district administration has sealed a gym allegedly being run illegally by Irshad Ali, 28, who was arrested over an allegedly objectionable Facebook post on the Ram temple donations embezzlement row. During a joint inspection, officials found the gym, located in a building's basement, lacked mandatory fire safety equipment and the operator failed to produce required documents. An FIR was registered on Sunday following a complaint alleging the post could hurt religious sentiments and disturb communal harmony. The controversy over alleged donation embezzlement prompted a state SIT probe, which has led to eight arrests based on preliminary findings.—*PTI*

Moitra alleges BJP workers hurled eggs at her

KOLKATA, 1 JULY

TMC MP Mahua Moitra on Wednesday alleged that BJP workers hurled eggs and raised slogans against her during a protest outside the residence of party MLA Alifa Ahmed in Nadia district, West Bengal. Moitra had gone to Palashi in Kaliganj to attend a TMC meeting at Ahmed's residence when a group of protesters gathered outside, shouting "go back" and "chor (thief)" slogans. She shared a video of the incident on social media, alleging that BJP workers orchestrated the protest. PTI, however, could not independently verify the video.—*PTI*

Ex-KCCI chief's property seized in J&K

SRINAGAR, 1 JULY

Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) attached the residential house and land of former Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Mubeen Ahmad Shah at Dalgate on Wednesday, officials said. Shah was arrested in 2019, ahead of the Centre's revocation of Article 370, and booked under the Public Safety Act in a 2020 terror-funding and secessionist propaganda case. He was later released on court orders and left for Malaysia, but was declared a proclaimed offender by a designated NIA court last December. —*PTI*

AAP TRUE SANATANI: KEJRI AFTER OPENING SITA TEMPLE IN PUNJAB

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Speaking after inaugurating a Sita temple in Punjab, AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal said the party is "true Sanatani" and has worked with genuine devotion towards its values, alleging that the BJP has merely used Lord Ram's name for political gains.

Kejriwal alleged that despite frequently invoking Lord Ram, senior BJP leaders have "failed" to visit the Ram temple and offer prayers. He claimed no public record exists of any senior BJP leader visiting the temple in over two years since its consecration, saying he verified this through publicly available information and conversations with journalists in Uttar Pradesh.

Referring to the controversy over alleged irregularities in temple donations, Kejriwal said devotees across the country were hurt by the developments and alleged that those actually responsible were being shielded, with more details expected to emerge soon.

He warned that the BJP would lose power at the Centre and in UP.

Asserting AAP's commitment to Sanatan values, Kejriwal cited the party's religious and welfare initiatives, including bhajan programmes in Punjab, temple restoration efforts, and pilgrimage facilitation schemes introduced during its Delhi government.

The BJP did not immediately react to the allegations. —*PTI*

Security firm denies role in Ram temple row

Firm blames SBI; SIT probing the donation scam granted 15-day extension

The accused in the Ram Mandir donations case being taken after court appearance, in Ayodhya –*ANI*

VARANASI, 1 JULY

A private security agency whose recruits were deployed at a cash-handling unit linked to Ram temple donation management has denied any role in the alleged embezzlement of offerings, saying it only supplied personnel to the State Bank of India (SBI) at the bank's request.

Gaurav Singh, director of Sainik Security Services, said the firm recruited 22 personnel and sent them to SBI's Ayodhya branch for housekeeping duties, and had no role in assigning their subsequent work. "Our company has nothing to do with the alleged donation theft," he said, adding that the chief manager had provided names and biodata of the staff, many of whom were previously employed elsewhere.

He said the company does not handle temple contracts and has shared all information with the Special Investigation Team (SIT), which is probing the case. The clarification comes as six of its recruits are among eight people arrested in the case.

The alleged embezzlement surfaced after an SIT constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government submitted its preliminary findings, leading to an FIR on June 25. Around 80 lakh in cash, along with foreign currency, has been recovered so far, police said, while CCTV footage has surfaced showing individuals allegedly carrying cash-filled bags from the Ram temple premises. Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh government has extended the SIT's tenure by 15 days till July 15 to widen and deepen the probe. Officials said the three-member SIT, headed by senior IAS and IPS officers, was originally constituted on June 13 and had sought additional time after submitting its preliminary report. Eight accused, including cash-handling staff, have been arrested, and investigations are continuing into alleged irregularities in donation handling at the Ayodhya shrine. —*PTI*

Ram Janmabhoomi Trust head hospitalised

LUCKNOW, 1 JULY

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust chairman Mahant Nritya Gopal Das has been admitted to the ICU of Medanta Hospital here after being diagnosed with a urinary tract infection. The 89-year-old was brought to the emergency in an unconscious state on June 29 at around 1.30 pm, a medical bulletin said. The Trust, set up to oversee Ram temple construction, is due to meet on July 6 amid recent resignations of trustees over a donation controversy. His attendance remains uncertain. —*PTI*

Family of accused seeks fair probe

PRATAPGARH, 1 JULY

The family of **Avinash Shukla (in pic)**, one of eight arrested in the alleged Ram temple donation theft case in Ayodhya, has said he should be "punished if found guilty, but given justice if innocent".

Shukla, a resident of Babupur Nariyawan village, was arrested for alleged involvement in cash reconciliation and misappropriation during donation counting. Police sources said 20 lakh was recovered from him earlier.

His father said Avinash had been living in Ayodhya with his brother, a primary school teacher, and the family hoped for a better future. His mother said the family raised their children with honesty and stressed respect for the law.

The family, owning 14 bighas of land, said it awaits a fair investigation and judicial outcome. —*PTI*

> **Those who have stolen from Lord Ram's temple will directly get cancer. It will be a death sentence from God. Wait for a year, they will develop cancer**
>
> -Anil Singh, BJP MLA

BJP DUBS THEM 'PRO-PAK'

Normalise ties with Pak: Citizens to govt

SRINAGAR, 1 JULY

More than 100 prominent citizens, including former Jammu and Kashmir chief ministers Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, from India and Pakistan have urged Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Shehbaz Sharif to revive bilateral dialogue and restore normal ties.

An open letter, signed by Abdullah, Mufti, former RAW chief AS Dulat, Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Jha, former diplomat Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, moderate separatist leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, former Union minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, former Pakistan foreign minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, besides several retired diplomats and civil society members, asked the two governments to take "meaningful and sustained steps towards restoring peace, normalcy, dialogue and cooperation in South Asia".

The letter dated 30 June co-ordinated by OP Shah, chairman of the Centre for Peace and Progress, and signed by 61 Indians and 55 Pakistanis, stressed that "sustained engagement and dialogue remain the only viable path to resolving differences". The appeal also sought reopening of trade channels, restoration of normal commercial relations, revival of the Most Favoured Nation or equivalent non-discriminatory trade arrangement and reopening of the Attari-Wagah land border.

Meanwhile, the BJP on Wednesday slammed a group of eminent people from India and Pakistan seeking revival of bilateral dialogue and restoration of normal ties between the two countries, calling them "pro-Pakistan brigade". —*PTI*

Keralam to scrutinise Adani-MSC Vizhinjam deal

T'PURAM, 1 JULY

Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan on Wednesday said the state government will closely examine the proposed transfer of a 49 per cent stake in Adani Vizhinjam Port Private Limited (AVPPL), the concessionaire for Vizhinjam port, to Switzerland-based MSC, saying there can be no ownership change without the state's prior approval.

Replying to a special submission by Leader of the Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan in the Assembly, Satheesan said the government had learnt about the proposed transaction only through media reports and had not received any formal communication from Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ).

Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani; Keralam CM VD Satheesan –*PTI*

On Tuesday, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) announced that Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), the world's largest shipping and logistics group, would acquire a 49 per cent stake in AVPPL for about USD 1.4 billion.

Earlier in the day, when the matter was raised by a member during Question Hour, Satheesan said there had been media reports regarding the proposed stake transfer, but the company had not approached the government seeking approval.

In his detailed reply to the Opposition leader's special submission, Satheesan said Adani Ports has not communicated anything to the Kerala Government regarding this matter.

The chief minister said the Companies Act treats the transfer of more than 25 per cent equity as a change in ownership and such a move cannot happen without the state's approval.

"When it comes, we will examine it," Satheesan said, adding that the government would evaluate five key aspects before taking a decision -- national security, public interest, fair competition, investment and the port's long-term development. —*PTI*

TVK ACCUSES DMK OF HORSE-TRADING BID; 3 ARRESTED

CHENNAI, 1 JULY

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) leader and Tamil Nadu minister R Nirmal Kumar on Wednesday alleged a horse trading attempt by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leadership to lure his legislators.

Based on the complaint by a TVK MLA, three men, which includes a person identified as Naresh who is in "close touch" with "DMK leader V" Senthilbalaji and his brother Ashok," have been arrested in connection with "horse-trading", he said.

Police said a person claiming to be the head of a political survey organisation was among the three arrested for contacting N Ilayaraja, TVK MLA from Uthangarai" Assembly Constituency in Krishnagiri. The MLA was lured with Rs 35 crore seeking his "cooperation" over an Assembly resolution against the Speaker.

"The MLA firmly declined, stating that he had no interest and instructed (accused) Thirunavukkarasu not to contact him again," police said.

Police arrested" Thirunavukkarasu, Naresh and Thiyagarajan. —*PTI*

Neglected for 2.5 yrs: BJP minister writes to MP CM

INDORE, 1 JULY

In a purported letter dated 20 June to Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Madhya Pradesh minister Kailash Vijayvargiya alleged that his home district Indore has been neglected in development projects. Vijayvargiya also warned that if Indore's development issues are not resolved, he will be forced to raise the voice of the city's people on a public platform.

The state Congress unit shared on social media a clipping of a report published in the Hindi daily "Dainik Bhaskar" containing excerpts from the purported letter and targeted the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

According to the report, Vijayvargiya raised issues such as delays in Indore's master plan, the relegation of Indore's name in the Ujjain-Indore Metropolitan Region, and other development projects.

He purportedly wrote: "As the head of the state and the minister in charge of my home district, I expected cooperation from you. However, over the past two and a half years, I have received only non-cooperation, neglect and opposition."

The senior BJP leader holds the portfolios of Urban Development and Housing, and Parliamentary Affairs.

When asked about the news report, Vijayvargiya told reporters, "You should ask the newspaper people where it came from and whether it's true or false." —*PTI*

Seychelles award citation for Modi is AI-generated

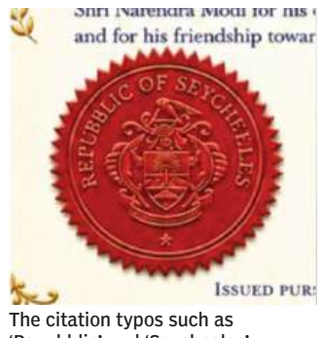
VICTORIA, 1 JULY

A citation for an award granted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi by the government of Seychelles has gone viral due to the many typos in the text.

The new presidential award, called the "Guardian of the Blue Horizon," was debuted by its handover to PM Modi. It had been approved by the country's cabinet on 24 June, four days before the award ceremony.

The citation, circulated by BJP, spelled republic as "Repubblic," Seychelles as "Seycheeles" and the Latin word OPUS as OPVS on the official-looking seal. Some social media users also claimed that the citation was generated by ChatGPT, although AI-verification tools are notoriously unreliable. They said that OpenAI's image verification tool detected a SynthID watermark in the image of the certificate, although the physical copy has not been examined.

Furthermore, the India's Ministry of External Affairs and the Seychelles State House have not published the citation on their official websites, which means that there is no way to compare the official citation to the one being circulated online.



The citation typos such as 'Repubblic' and 'Seycheeles' -*x*

Modi was at Seychelles' National Day parade as guest of honour at the country's Golden Jubilee celebrations for 50 years of independence. Mauritian Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam and African Union Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf were also chief guests. 9 bilateral outcomes across defence, maritime security, digital payments, healthcare, agriculture, education and space cooperation emerged from the visit. Modi also announced a USD 175 million Special Economic Package for the country. —*Salar News*

Jamshedpur on alert after Karni Sena man's killing

JAMSHEDPUR, 1 JULY

The East Singhbhum administration imposed prohibitory orders under BNS Section 163 in parts of Jamshedpur on Wednesday, anticipating unrest following the killing of Karni Sena leader Himanshu Singh, 28, who died after being stabbed during a protest against alleged eve-teasing at a Bistupur bar. His friend remains critically injured.

Police had briefly detained the accused after an initial scuffle, but the attackers allegedly dragged the duo from a patrol vehicle and stabbed them, triggering outrage. The BJP has threatened a citywide shutdown if the accused are not arrested immediately, while Singh's family has refused to cremate the body, demanding arrests within 48 hours and action against police personnel present at the scene. The post-mortem was conducted late on Tuesday.

Senior police officers attempted to persuade the family to proceed with the last rites, but without success. BJP leader Raghubar Das alleged police inaction during the attack, demanded murder charges against officers, demolition of accused persons' houses, and a government job for Singh's wife.

He also submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner, calling the state government a "government of criminals and mafia". —*PTI*

'NO PERSONALITY RIGHTS'

HC orders takedown of 'defamatory' post against Raghav

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the removal of certain social media posts found to be defamatory against Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha, while holding that his lawsuit did not involve personality rights.

The court ordered takedown of content alleging that Chadha had "sold himself for money", describing such material as prima facie defamatory. However, Justice Subramonium Prasad said a public figure should not be "thin-skinned" and must accept criticism of political decisions.

The court observed that personality rights relate to con

Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha -PTI

Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha trol over one's image, name and commercial exploitation, and noted that Chadha had not pressed arguments on this aspect, restricting his plea to defamation. Refusing to order removal of a majority of the flagged content, the court said much of it amounted to satire on political decisions, which does not automatically become offensive or defamatory. It added that political leaders must expect "bouquets and brickbats", including humour arising from party switches.

At the same time, the court held that posts containing explicit, vulgar or malicious material fell outside "harmless satirical humour" and directed social media platforms to take them down within two weeks. Platforms were also asked to provide subscriber information and IP logs of accounts involved.

Chadha had sought removal of alleged AI-generated, deepfake and manipulated content, claiming it damaged his reputation and violated his rights.

The court, however, emphasised the need to balance free speech with protection against defamation, particularly in the context of emerging AI-generated political content. —*PTI*

Celebs who have their personality rights protected

Actors Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan and Salman Khan, Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, journalist Sudhir Chaudhary, podcaster Raj Shamani and Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan.

—CHHATTISGARHPOLICE

2 cops held with tiger skins in Chhattisgarh

RAIPUR, 1 JULY

Two Maharashtra Police personnel were arrested in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district with two tiger skins, while a subsequent search of one accused's home in Gadchiroli recovered a large quantity of pangolin scales, exposing a suspected interstate wildlife trafficking racket. Baburao Madavi and Bijeshwar Gedam were intercepted on a motorcycle during a joint operation under Operation Safe Passage. Officials said the tiger skins are believed to have come from the Indravati Tiger Reserve–Abujhmad landscape. A case has been registered under the Wildlife (Protection) Act. Authorities suspect the duo acted as middlemen, with efforts continuing to trace the poachers. —*PTI*

Fake gram flour, pulses seized in UP

SHAHJAHANPUR, 1 JULY

Fake gram flour worth around Rs 32 lakh and a large quantity of pulses were seized during a raid on a mill in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur after a Delhi-based company alleged misuse of its trademark. Police recovered packed gram flour bearing the company's brand name and around 200 empty branded packets from the mill in the Char Khamba area. Samples of the gram flour and pulses have been collected for laboratory testing, while the remaining stock has been sealed. An FIR has been registered against Anuradha Agrawal under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Trade Marks Act. Investigations are continuing. —*PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

Fire at WB naptha pipeline doused after 18 hours

HALDIA, 1 JULY

A massive fire in a naphtha pipeline at the Haldia Petrochemicals complex in West Bengal's Purba Medinipore district was brought under control after nearly 18 hours, with cooling operations continuing to prevent the pipeline from rupturing. One person was killed and more than 20 injured in Tuesday's blaze. Officials, including the district magistrate, superintendent of police and local MLA, visited the site, while affected families were shifted to a relief camp. A district administration probe has been ordered to determine the cause. The fire also disrupted train services as a railway line runs close to the complex. —*PTI*

Child dies after falling into borewell

AMBALA, 1 JULY

Four-year-old Nirvair Singh was pulled out dead early Wednesday after a 21-hour rescue operation to save him from a 220-foot borewell in Haryana's Ambala district. He was declared dead on retrieval and taken for postmortem.

The boy fell into the open borewell on Tuesday while playing in a field where he'd gone with his father to deliver food to his grandfather. Wet soil is believed to have given way as he leaned in. Villagers tried rescuing him before alerting authorities. NDRF, Army, and district officials led the rescue, hampered by rain. Minister Anil Vij visited the site and met the family. Police have been told to act against those responsible for leaving the borewell uncovered. —*PTI*

FLOODS LEAVE TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION

46,938 affected in Assam's 221 villages; 4 killed in Himachal; 2 electrocuted in Mumbai

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Heavy monsoon rain continued to batter several parts of the country on Wednesday, triggering floods, landslides, transport disruption and weather alerts across the north-east, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra.

In Assam, the flood situation remained grim, with 46,938 people affected across 221 villages in six districts, according to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA). Dhemaji was the worst-hit district, accounting for 45,841 affected people. One woman died in Sissiborgaon, marking the state's first flood fatality this year. The Brahmaputra and another major river were flowing above the danger level, while more than 3,809 hectares of farmland and 88,000 livestock were affected. Over 450 displaced people were housed in four relief camps.

Neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh reported four deaths, 21 injuries and two people missing after a week of heavy rain, flash floods and landslides. Around 90,499 people across 251 villages were affected, with Upper Siang the worst-hit district. Rescue and relief operations involving the SDRF, NDRF, Air Force, district authorities and volunteers are continuing.

In Himachal Pradesh, a 38-year-old woman was killed by a falling boulder near Aut in Mandi district as torrential rain caused landslides, road closures, power outages and rising river levels. Houses were damaged in Chamba, while 44 roads were shut across Mandi, Kullu, Lahaul-Spiti and Una. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert for heavy to very heavy rainfall until 6 July, except 4 July.

The IMD also issued an orange alert for Mumbai until Saturday, forecasting heavy to very heavy rainfall. On Wednesday, two school students were electrocuted at Nerul's LP Bridge after live wire turned into a deadly high-voltage trap on a waterlogged road. Locals admitted them to a hospital and they were out of danger. —*PTI*

Debris and mud flow across an area after heavy rainfall triggered flash floods, at Gandoh in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir —*PTI*

- Meanwhile, two college students were electrocuted at Nerul's LP Bridge in Mumbai after live wire turned into a deadly high-voltage trap on a waterlogged road. Locals admitted them to a hospital and the girls were out of danger

Tree fall natural: Minister on Mumbai boy's death

Maharashtra Social Justice Minister Sanjay Shirsat on Wednesday said incidents such as trees falling and lightning strikes are "beyond human control" and "natural", following the death of an 11-year-old boy in Mumbai's Chembur area.

A 70-year-old roadside tree uprooted on Tuesday and fell on a school bus carrying Universal High School students, killing Vihan Shrivastav and injuring five others, including one critically. The bus, operated by Make Force company, was transporting students when the incident occurred.

"It's natural for trees to fall," he said, adding that such events cannot be predicted or prevented. The injured students were shifted to Zen Hospital for treatment, while opposition parties have questioned civic readiness ahead of the monsoon. —*Agencies*

Non-supply of chargesheet copy to accused no ground for bail: SC

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that the non-supply of a copy of the chargesheet to an accused cannot be a ground for a default bail, while upholding an order of the Bombay High Court which had rejected a man's plea seeking default bail on the ground of non-supply of a chargesheet copy to him.

The top court said non-filing of additional copies of the chargesheet under Section 193(8) of the BNSS would not vitiate the chargesheet itself.

The apex court said that as was the case under the erstwhile The Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC), the position under Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS) is to remain that the right to default bail arises when the chargesheet is not filed within a period of 60 or 90 days, as applicable.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by an accused arrested in connection with a case registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for an alleged large-scale cyber fraud case involving approximately Rs 3.81 crore.

The CBI claimed that unknown cyber criminals are using sophisticated digital means to extort money from individuals which included using tools for impersonation and creating forged documents.

Further, they are being assisted by bank officials for the deposit of the cyber fraud proceeds into their bank accounts, the CBI said. —*PTI*

- SC said non-filing of additional copies of the chargesheet under Section 193(8) of the BNSS would not vitiate the chargesheet itself

Plea in SC refers to 'Rs 370 biryani' remark at comedy show

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Referring to a controversial "Rs 370 biryani" remark during comedian Pranit More's show in Gurugram, a plea was filed in the Supreme Court on Wednesday seeking direction to formulate a comprehensive regulatory framework for stand-up comedy, podcasts, social media platforms and AI generated content.

The plea by advocate Vishal Tiwari said misleading material attained extraordinary circulation in a short span of time and generated extensive public commentary concerning the independence and propriety of constitutional institutions, before any official clarification could reach the public domain. It also said that legal mechanisms are predominantly reactive rather than preventative. —*PTI*

Maharashtra admits to closure of 12,000 MSMEs

MUMBAI, 1 JULY

Maharashtra Industries Minister Uday Samant on Wednesday acknowledged that thousands of micros, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) had shut down over the past four years, describing reports of more than 12,000 closures as "partially true". Responding to BJP MLA Sudhir Mungantiwar in the Assembly, Samant said the government was aware that several MSMEs had ceased operations, though he did not confirm the exact figure.

The minister attributed the closures to the lingering impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, rising raw material, fuel and electricity costs, inflationary pressures, weaker demand, higher borrowing costs and supply chain disruptions. He also cited the ongoing conflict in West Asia,

which has increased freight costs, disrupted global supply chains and contributed to volatile energy prices.

Samant noted that some reported closures reflected technical deregistration on the Centre's Udyam Portal, including duplicate registrations and restructuring of enterprises, rather than permanent business shutdowns.

However, Samant did not provide a district-wise break-up of closed units or details of how many had resumed operations under the revival initiatives. —*PTI*

'Minister didn't know where TET paper is printed'

MUMBAI, 1 JULY

BJP MLA Sudhir Mungantiwar on Wednesday claimed Maharashtra School Education Minister Dada Bhuse privately admitted he was unaware that Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) question papers were being printed in Agra, exposing serious lapses in the department. Bhuse was unavailable for comment.

The TET, affecting six lakh candidates, was postponed a day before the exam after an alleged paper leak in Thane. Police arrested four people while a Special Investigation Team is probing an interstate racket.

Mungantiwar said Bhuse had assured him future TET exams would be held online and question papers made in Maharashtra. —*PTI*

M'rashtra govt to form task force against illegal IVF centres

MUMBAI, 1 JULY

The Maharashtra government will form a Special Task Force to crack down on illegal IVF and sonography centres, Public Health Minister Prakash Abitkar told the Assembly, adding such offences may be brought under organised crime laws. The state also began recruiting 1,400 doctors on National Doctors' Day to address rural staff shortages, while promising funds for incomplete hospital projects and payment of pending Covid-19 dues to ASHA, Anganwadi and contractual workers. —*PTI*

8 KILLED IN ACCIDENT

Eight people were killed and 24 injured after a bus rammed into a truck and caught fire on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway in Rajasthan's Dausa district early on Wednesday —*PTI*

IPS officer held for graft

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested a senior IPS officer posted on central deputation in the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), in an alleged Rs 3 crore bribery case linked to the probe into a fake drug manufacturing racket, officials said on Wednesday.

Deepak Gahlawat, a 2012-batch IPS officer of Haryana cadre, was serving as BCAS regional director. He is accused of assuring a Puducherry-based businessman a favourable outcome in the CBI probe by using his influence over agency officials in return for the bribe.

Searches have been conducted at multiple premises and multiple digital devices, hard disks, and documents have been seized," a CBI spokesperson said. The arrest stems from an FIR by the CBI on 8 June against Delhi Police Crime Branch Inspector Pradeep Singh, alleged middleman Rajkumar and businessman N Raja. —*PTI*

CBSE asks schools to hold cyber hygiene certification course

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The CBSE has directed its affiliated schools to promote cyber safety by encouraging students, teachers and parents to enrol in a 2.5-hour cyber hygiene certification course and establish cyber clubs to organise monthly awareness activities, according to officials.

"The initiative, under a nationwide campaign by the Home Minister's Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), aims to strengthen cybercrime awareness and promote cyber hygiene among students, teachers and parents. This is crucial as children's increasing use of digital platforms exposes them to online risks, including grooming, cyberbullying, identity theft, online harassment, and financial cyberfraud," a senior board official said.

The board has advised schools to organise activities such as quizzes, speeches, poster-making competitions, pledge drives, debates, and awareness sessions on the first Wednesday of every month, observed as "Cyber Jagrookta Diwas". Schools may also integrate cyber awareness into annual events, parent-teacher interactions and special campaigns.

Officials have advised schools to circulate a cyber safety pledge among students, asking them to get their parents' signatures. The pledge focuses on safe online practices, responsible social media use, and basic cyber hygiene. —*PTI*

Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit is new Vice Chief of IAF

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit on Wednesday assumed charge as the Vice Chief of the Air Staff (VCAS), succeeding Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor, who superannuated on June 30 after a four-decade-long career in the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Dixit, who most recently served as Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (CISC) at Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS), was given a guard of honour at Vayu Bhawan, the IAF headquarters, in New Delhi. He also visited the National War Memorial and paid homage to fallen soldiers.

As CISC, he played a key role in Operation Sindoor and contributed to the release of 20 joint doctrines, the conceptualisation of Ran Samwad 2025–26, and the formulation of the Defence Forces Vision 2047 roadmap. He assumed the CISC post on

May 1, 2025, and demitted office on June 30.

Commissioned into the fighter stream in December 1986, Dixit is an alumnus of the NDA, DSSC and National Defence College.

A qualified flying instructor and experimental test pilot, he has over 3,300 flying hours on more than 20 aircraft, including Mirage-2000, MiG-21 and Jaguar. Air Marshal Tejinder Singh is expected to succeed him as CISC. —*PTI*

GUJARAT COURT ORDER

Hindu marriage void if saptapadi not performed: HC

AHMEDABAD, 1 JULY

The Gujarat High Court has ruled that registration alone cannot validate a Hindu marriage if essential customary rites, including saptapadi (seven steps around the sacred fire), are not performed. Quashing a family court order, a division bench of Justices Ilesh Vora and RT Vachhani held that such ceremonies form the legal, social and spiritual foundation of a Hindu marriage under Section 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act.

The ruling came on an appeal by UK-based Kaushal Sonar, who sought to have an alleged marriage declared void. Sonar claimed he never solemnised the marriage, never performed Hindu rituals, never lived with the respondent as

husband and wife, and alleged his signature on marriage documents was obtained fraudulently.

The High Court noted the respondent had admitted before the family court that no marriage ceremonies were performed and the parties never cohabited. It held that, in the absence of essential rites, the basic requirement of a valid Hindu marriage was not met.

Describing marriage as a samskara and sacrament, the court said it is "not merely an occasion for song and dance" or a commercial transaction, but a sacred institution founded on equality, consent and lifelong commitment.

It urged young people to understand the significance of marriage before entering into it.

It may be noted that not all Hindu marriages include the Saptapadi. For instance, in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, communities follow Suyamariyathai (Self-Respect) or Seerthiruttha marriages, where the exchange of rings, garlands, or the tying of the thali (mangalsutra) is completely sufficient. —*PTI*

VB-G RAM G Act comes into force

- The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025, will come into force on 1 July, with the Centre on Tuesday notifying revised wage rates under the new rural employment guarantee scheme.The national average wage has now increased from Rs 298.8 per day under MGNREGA to Rs 327.4 per day under VB-G RAM G, an average increase of Rs 28.6 per day.

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The Ministry of Rural Development said the revised wage rates have been increased across all 34 states, Union Territories and wage regions.

It said a new interim base wage rate of Rs 300 per day has been introduced, ensuring that no notified wage under the programme is below that level. The government said the average increase in wage rates across the country is over 10 per cent.

The ministry said the Act provides a statutory guarantee of up to 125 days of wage employment to eligible rural households, compared to 100 days under the existing rural employment framework.

It said 21 states and administrative units have been brought up to the new Rs 300 interim base wage rate, while states including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Assam will see wage increases in the range of 15 per cent to 25 per cent. Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland will see the highest percentage increase of nearly 24.5 per cent, it added.

The government said the revised wage structure has been designed to ensure that the greatest gains accrue to states that historically had lower wage rates. It added that states with higher existing wage rates have also received upward revisions, with Haryana having a notified wage rate of Rs 409, Goa Rs 406, Kerala Rs 401 and Sikkim's high-altitude gram panchayats Rs 450 per day.

The ministry said an interim allocation of Rs 95,692.31 crore has been made to states and Union Territories to ensure a smooth transition, timely wage payments and uninterrupted implementation of works under the new framework.

Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the government's priority was to ensure that "no eligible rural worker remains without work even for a single day".

"The commencement of the VB-G RAM G Act is a historic step towards building a Viksit Bharat through prosperous villages," he said, adding the Centre and states have worked together to complete preparations for the rollout.

The government said existing e-KYC-verified job cards will remain valid until the new Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards are issued.

The gram panchayats will continue to play a key role in implementation of the scheme, with focus on areas such as natural resource management, water conservation, agriculture and allied activities, rural infrastructure and women's empowerment, it added.

According to the ministry, 29 states and Union Territories have made budgetary provisions for the Act, while 24 states have notified their VB-G RAM G state schemes.

Prior to this notification, wage rates in several states were below Rs 300, with the lowest notified wage being Rs 241 per day.

The rollout of the new law comes amid criticism from opposition parties and activists, who have raised concerns over changes in the existing rural employment guarantee framework.

They have questioned if the new system could affect the demand-driven nature of employment, the role of states and panchayats, and whether adequate financial resources would be available for implementation.

The government has maintained that the new framework will strengthen rural livelihood security, improve asset creation and provide a more comprehensive approach to employment generation.

The national launch of the VB-G RAM G Act will be held on July 2 at Mukkavaripalli village in Obulavaripalle mandal of Andhra Pradesh's Tirupati district, according to the ministry.

The event will include the distribution of Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards and the release of awareness material related to the mission.

CONGRESS SAYS WAGES 'UNJUSTIFIABLY LOW'

The Congress demanded the repeal of the rural employment scheme and that a strengthened MGNREGA be brought back, claiming the wages under the new law are "unjustifiably low".

The opposition party asserted that a just minimum wage for India's workers would be ensured by adopting the 2019 recommendation of the expert committee headed by Dr Anoop Satpathy and accommodating the increase in prices since then.

It alleged that the only guarantee the new law offers is that of extreme centralisation and weakening of the bargaining power of rural labour, and demanded that the wage rate be fixed at Rs 500 per day.

Congress general secretary and former rural development minister Jairam Ramesh said on X: "The injustice of the Modi Government's new law aside, the wages due to workers are also unjustifiably low – largely at Rs. 300 per day."

In the 2024 Lok Sabha campaign, the Congress as part of its Shramik Nyay campaign had guaranteed a Rs 400 national daily minimum wage to all workers – including for MGNREGA, he pointed out.

"The Expert Committee headed by Dr Anoop Satpathy, set up by the Modi Government, had also recommended a national minimum wage floor at Rs 375 per day, back in 2019," he said.

Congress leader and MP Saptagiri Ulaka said, "Previously, funds under MGNREGA were allocated based on the demand for employment; however, under the VB G RAM G scheme, a fixed budget is provided within which the work must be completed."

Ulaka said the central government used to cover nearly 100 per cent of the labour cost, while material costs followed a 60:40 ratio, placing a minimal financial burden on the states.

However, under VB G RAM G, the combined labour and material costs are now subject to a 60:40 ratio, he said. "If additional work needs to be provided beyond this, the financial burden will fall on the state government," he said.

The Modi government claims that 125 days of employment will be provided under the scheme, but that is not the reality, Ulaka claimed.

"The allocation for Haryana, for example, stands at Rs 984 crore, of which the state must contribute 40 per cent -- amounting to Rs 393 crore. Despite this expenditure, only 13.78 days of work are currently being generated in Haryana. If this were to be increased to 125 days, Haryana would have to spend an additional Rs 5,786 crore," he said. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

Mutton shortage hits Kashmiri weddings, Punjab blamed

- The wedding season in Kashmir is losing its sheen amid the mutton crisis - a problem that traders in the Valley attribute to an "illegal" levy imposed by Punjab on livestock passing through the state. Weddings in Kashmir are incomplete without Wazwan, a traditional multi-course meat-based meal, acting as the ultimate culinary centrepiece in the celebrations.

The wedding season in Kashmir is losing its sheen amid the mutton crisis - a problem that traders in the Valley attribute to an "illegal" levy imposed by Punjab on livestock passing through the state.

Weddings in Kashmir are incomplete without Wazwan, a traditional multi-course meat-based meal, acting as the ultimate culinary centrepiece in the celebrations. Around 500 kilogrammes of mutton and 150 kilogrammes of chicken are consumed at an average Kashmiri wedding, while more than a tonne of mutton is used at the lavish ones.

Traders say that the alleged levy has dampened the wedding fervour in the Valley.

"We are facing an acute shortage of mutton due to the problems created by the Punjab government. If this situation continues, I will not be able to supply livestock to my clients in this wedding season," Altaf Ganaie, a mutton dealer from Budgam, told PTI.

Ganaie claimed that if the impasse is not resolved within the next 15 days, he will incur losses to the tune of lakhs of rupees.

"I have made payments to the supplier in Rajasthan, but I have not received any sheep in the past month. It will be difficult to make a living if this situation continues," he added.

All Kashmir Wholesale and Retail Mutton Dealers Association president Khazir Mohammad Regoo likened the 4 per cent levy imposed by Punjab to 'Goonda Tax'.

He said there was no justification for the Punjab government to impose any tax as the livestock are bought from Rajasthan or Delhi.

Abdul Majeed Bhat, a resident of Hyderpora, is contemplating postponing his son's wedding in view of the mutton crisis.

"My son is scheduled to get married on 25 July. I am unable to decide whether to go ahead with the wedding feast. We might have to postpone it," Bhat said.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said he has taken up the concerns of mutton dealers with his Punjab counterpart, Bhagwant Mann, and sought his intervention to ensure the smooth movement of livestock vehicles through the neighbouring state.

Abdullah informed Mann that livestock-laden vehicles bound for Jammu & Kashmir were allegedly being stopped by certain contractor groups operating in connection with cattle fairs, and subjected to unauthorised fee collection, despite carrying all valid permits and requisite documentation.

"I have taken up this issue with the Punjab government, seeking immediate intervention to ensure the unhindered movement of livestock transport vehicles through Punjab," Abdullah had said.

"They are just using the highway. There is no justification for unauthorised levies being imposed on the mutton dealers from Jammu and Kashmir," he added.

The chief minister posted on social media a letter he had written to Mann last week, seeking his intervention.

In the letter, he told Mann that such disruptions not only caused avoidable delays, but also financial losses and hardship to transporters, adversely affecting animal welfare.

The Chief Minister said the matter was being examined by the Kashmir Department of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs through an internal committee.

"The findings indicate that transporters are reportedly being compelled to make substantial payments per vehicle during transit without any apparent legal sanction. The committee has further observed that livestock movement is exempt from GST and that the continued imposition of such charges is placing an additional burden on the livestock trade, with consequential impact on meat prices and consumers in Jammu & Kashmir," he added.

Abdullah reminded Mann that Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir share longstanding bonds of friendship, cooperation and economic interdependence.

"Any such practices, if found to be occurring, are inconsistent with the spirit of cooperation that has traditionally characterised relations between us and have understandably caused concern among the trading community," he wrote. *—PTI*

Weddings in Kashmir are incomplete without Wazwan, a multi-course meat-based meal –FACEBOOK

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Little help, stalled cranes: Venezuela quake rescue effort falters

Angelica Mundrain wants the bodies of her son, niece and nephew to be pulled from the rubble of her flattened beachfront apartment. She has spent every minute of the past six days waiting for the heavy machinery needed to remove the slabs of concrete and twisted metal that trapped them.

So have other Venezuelan earthquake survivors.

They, like others across the northern state of La Guaira, have the same question: Who is in charge? Venezuela's self-described socialist government, which long prided itself on being protector and provider, has been neither when it mattered most, many said.

The powerful back-to-back earthquakes on 24 June have brought to the forefront the inability of the party that has ruled the country for 27 years - now with acting President Delcy Rodriguez at the helm - to carry out basic governmental functions.

"We've been abandoned," Mundrain said, sitting in a chair on the street Tuesday in front of what remained of the 11-storey building she once called home. "We feel helpless. What we have seen is a lack of organisation, a lack of empathy, a lack of everything."

In the critical 72 hours after residential buildings, food joints, pharmacies, hotels and convenience stores imploded in La Guaira state, Caracas and surrounding regions, the on-the-ground response was primarily focused on directing traffic, with police officers, intelligence agents and members of the armed forces manning intersections.

RESIDENTS TAKE ON RESCUE AMID GOVT FAILURE

Civilians, mostly alone and some with the help of foreign rescuers, searched for loved ones among piles of rubble. Ambulances were stuck in kilometres-long traffic jams. Hospitals were undersupplied and understaffed. Emergency personnel responded with little to no equipment.

A week later, many residents in coastal communities of La Guaira were attributing most rescues and recoveries to fellow Venezuelans and foreign teams with know-how and equipment like thermal cameras and sound detectors as well as trained dogs. They also pointed out that while civilians and foreign rescuers worked, men and women in Venezuelan uniforms stood watching and state workers took selfies.

TRUMP'S CAPTURE OF MADURO SPELLS DOOM

Tulane University professor David Smilde, who has studied Venezuela for three decades, said the tragedy has made clear that the stunning 3 January capture of then-President Nicolas Maduro by US forces was not a one-off "in which the Venezuelan state was not able to defend itself at all."

"It also can't do anything like get started with digging people out," he said, adding that it should be a worrying concern for Rodriguez, who was sworn in after Maduro was deposed and taken to New York to face drug trafficking charges.

Smilde said the dismal response is linked to the huge numbers of people who have left the public sector because of extremely low pay as well as corruption, such as the many people who are included in the government's payroll but who have not worked in months or years. People have specific duties to design protocols spelling out procedures in case of emergencies, including earthquakes.

While civilians and foreign rescuers worked, men and women in Venezuelan uniforms stood watching and state workers took selfies –PTI

WEALTH AND GOVT CONNECTIONS MEAN SOME GET HELP

Wealth and government connections also influenced the government's response, with some sites given preferential treatment.

When one collapsed building was teeming with police and military school students, people accurately guessed that officials or politically connected individuals must have lived there. The police officers from a neighbouring state were indeed searching for a captain, while the students and a few members of the national guard were hoping to locate a major general.

A telescopic crane, like the one Mundrain needs for the recovery of her family, was parked for several hours in what was that building's entrance. The relatives of the well-off families who lived in the building were able to rent it. Mundrain cannot.

PEOPLE FORCED TO FIGHT WITH AUTHORITIES

People's anger over the response has also led to altercations between residents and machine operators. In one instance, when a government-provided excavator tried to leave the site of a flattened public housing building, people blocked traffic to keep it in place and even pulled the operator from the cab.

The government has reported that 1,943 died and more than 10,500 were injured. Thousands more have been reported missing.

Rescuers on Tuesday continued to free some survivors from mountains of debris, offering anguished families a sliver of hope even as the likelihood of finding people alive diminished with each passing hour. The first 48 to 72 hours after a natural disaster are crucial to rescue efforts, though survival can be extended if people have access to food and water.

Electrician Daniel Castillo was able to pull his mother and son alive from their second-floor apartment in a collapsed public housing building in La Guaira just hours after the earthquake struck. The body of his brother remained inside for another day until he could reach him.

On Tuesday, he decried the government's response while he waited in line to get a free bag of hygiene products, including toilet paper and soap, from a tent staffed by the Venezuelan armed forces.

"You see the guards, and their uniforms are spotless, not dirty at all," Castillo said, contrasting members of Venezuela's National Guard with dust-covered civilians and foreign rescuers who have dug through rubble for days. "The government did nothing." *—PTI*

Cuba to debate US embargo in UN as talks stall

HAVANA, 1 JULY

Talks between Cuba and the US are at a standstill, despite the island recently approving a series of free-market reforms, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said on Tuesday while announcing a 7 July debate at the UN General Assembly on the energy embargo imposed by US President Donald Trump in late January. The reforms include more space for private businesses, free hiring of personnel and authorisation for private banks and investment by Cubans abroad, but these were not discussed in the negotiations between two nations, as Havan is not "interested in the US' opinion on them". Instead, Rodriquez called Trump's blockade, which has led to blackouts and paralysed the economy, a "threat to the existence of Cuba". *—PTI*

Russia, Ukraine trade massive airstrikes

MOSCOW, 1 JULY

Russia and Ukraine exchanged major overnight airstrikes, with Russian attacks killing at least three people in southeastern Ukraine while Kyiv struck key energy and military targets deep inside Russian territory. Russian drone strikes in the Dnipropetrovsk region killed a woman and damaged five petrol stations, Governor Oleksandr Hanzha said. A separate attack on Zaporizhzhia late Tuesday killed two people, Ukrainian media reported. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Kyiv hit an oil refinery in Ufa 1,300 km from the front line, and targeted Russia's military-industrial complex about 600 km away. He called the attacks as "long-range sanctions". The recent deep strikes by Ukraine have pushed Russian crude processing to its lowest in two decades, causing a massive fuel crunch. *—AGENCIES*

—ANI

WH taps Harvard prof to probe threats by UFOs

WASHINGTON, 1 JULY

The Trump administration has appointed Harvard astronomer Avi Loeb to lead a new White House scientific advisory council to examine national security risks posed by unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP), commonly known as UFOs. The council will support a newly created White House panel following President Donald Trump's push to declassify more information on unexplained aerial sightings. Loeb, a former Harvard astronomy department chair, is known for controversial theories suggesting some unexplained objects could be linked to extraterrestrial technology. His team will investigate reports of mysterious objects seen by military personnel. *—PTI*

Blocking Indus threatens nuke Armageddon: Bilawal

'Pak's nuke doctrine lets it to respond if water is weaponised'

ISLAMABAD, 1 JULY

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari issued a stern warning to India over the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), stating that New Delhi's move to restrict water that goes into Pakistan could trigger "nuclear Armageddon".

Speaking at seminar in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said that Indus water is a "lifeline for Pakistan" and said that India's move to limit the release of water was turning that "into a noose" which "must be treated as a threat to the foundation of" Pakistan.

India held the globally renowned IWT "in abeyance" after the deadly Pahalgam attack in April 2025 where terrorists killed at least 26 people. Under the treaty, India controls the eastern rivers, Ravi, Sutlej and Beas, while Pakistan receives the waters of the western rivers — the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab.

PPP Chairman Bilawal Butto Zardari *—WIKIPEDIA*

Bhutto Zardari said Pakistan's nuclear doctrine identifies extreme scenarios, including threats to its economy and waterways, as matters of national survival.

"One of the key aspects of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine is that attempts to strangle the country's economy or restrict its waterways fall among the rare scenarios that Pakistan has said could trigger a nuclear response," he said.

> **The closing of the Strait of Hormuz was the weaponisation of a waterway.... Just as there can be no ceasefire and peace deal between Iran and the US when it is closed, how can any ceasefire between India and Pakistan hold without the Indus Water Treaty being restored?**
>
> -Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, PPP Chairman

"If the closing of Pakistan's waters is a nuclear Armageddon scenario, then Pakistan must not merely deal with this as an environmental issue, but as an existential assault on Pakistan that requires a collaborative military response," he said.

Bhutto Zardari said that "sustainable peace could not be achieved without the restoration of the Indus Waters Treaty", claiming India was using it as a "pressure point".

Accusing New Delhi was not adhering to the terms of the ceasefire while Pakistan was, he asked if Islamabad should also treat the deal as void. He added that the IWT was not a "favour to Pakistan".

Bhutto Zardari warned that every attempt to divert the flow of the water – including calling for tenders – could trigger a "military response", even as he said that Islamabad did not seek war.

Earlier, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar posted on X that attempts to alter water dynamics would have "profound consequences" for regional peace and security, but stressed that it was a "valid and binding" treaty. *—Salar News*

TIT FOR TAT ESCALATES

Afghanistan says it struck ISIS module in Pakistan

KABUL, 1 JULY

Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence said that its air force carried out precision airstrikes on ISIS positions inside Pakistan's Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces on Tuesday.

The strikes came after Pakistan bombed parts of Afghanistan on Monday, killing at least 28 people and injuring 49 others in retaliation for a "terrorist attack" on its soil earlier. Islamabad has repeatedly accused the Taliban government of allowing terrorists to use Afghan soil as a launchpad to carry out strikes in Pakistan.

The Taliban's Defence Ministry on X said that the "precision strikes" carried out by the air force targeted infrastructure and that "no civilians" were killed.

Pakistan's military said the drones were spotted immediately and neutralised, while provincial authorities said a drone was sighted near a government school in Saranan. Two people were injured.

Afghanistan has no fighter jets but is known to possess at least six aircraft and 23 helicopters, according to the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies shows. The Taliban is also known to have used drones in fighting with Pakistan.

The Taliban described the groups and targets as "agents of chaos and violence".

The strikes come even as the two countries are observing a China and Turkey brokered ceasefire after "open war" last year. *—Agencies*

Win for Xi: Trump as SC bins changes to birthright citizenship

WASHINGTON, 1 JULY

US President Donald Trump said that the Supreme Court rejecting his bid to end automatic citizenship for babies born to immigrants in the US was calling the ruling a "massive Birthright Citizenship win " for China and President Xi Jinping.

The court ruled on Tuesday 6-3 that children born in the US to parents who are unlawfully or temporarily present are entitled to automatic citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment's Citizenship Clause, known as birthright citizenship.

Meanwhile, the President and Chief of Policy and Strategy of Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS), Khanderao Kand, lauded the decision and said the Indian-American community, nearly 5.2 million strong, includes highly skilled professionals and family members waiting in the employment-based green card backlog for years.

He hoped that the ruling will help them.

The Congressional Tri-Caucus said the Supreme Court ruling affirms that every child born in the US is a citizen and that Trump cannot override the Constitution or strip people's rights with a stroke of a pen. *— Agencies*

FRONTMAN OF '70S BAND VILLAGE PEOPLE THAT MADE 'YMCA' DIES

NEW YORK, 1 JULY

Victor Willis, frontman of disco group Village People and co-writer of the iconic hit YMCA, died on Monday aged 74, the band announced on social media. Willis was the lead singer behind several of the group's biggest songs and portrayed characters including a policeman and naval officer during performances. The band is best known for its 1978 albums 'Cruisin', featuring 'YMCA', and 'Macho Man'. After leaving the group in 1980, Willis battled drug addiction and was ordered into treatment in 2006. He rejoined Village People in 2017 and performed at President Donald Trump's pre-inauguration rally in January 2025. Trump, who dances to 'YMCA' expressed condolences. *—Salar News*

Israel trying to derail peace talks: Iran

Iranian state media has been reporting that its military is on high alert, particularly near its western borders *—PRESS TV*

TEHRAN, 1 JULY

Iran has once again warned that Israel is trying to derail its peace talks with the US as negotiators from both countries met in Qatar's capital Doha for "technical talks" on Wednesday.

In a fiery televised address after his diplomatic mission to Switzerland, Iran's Parliament Speaker and chief negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said: "The reason for its opposition is that this agreement is truly a document of defeat for America and the Zionist regime (Israel)".

"The Zionist regime's entire effort was to disrupt this agreement as much as it could, because the first paragraph of this agreement stipulates that the war should end based on Lebanon's territorial sovereignty within the official borders and geographical map of this country, that no military operations should be carried out, that the people should return to their homes, and that the enemy should withdraw from the lands it occupied," he added.

Ghalibaf further alleged that Israel intensified its military operations after the memorandum was signed in an attempt to complicate its implementation.

Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi responded to Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz saying that Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei was "marked for death".

"POTUS has committed the US to muzzling its pets in Tel Aviv (in the MoU)," he posted on X. "If they ignore their master, Iran will school them. Any threat against our People and leadership will receive immediate powerful response."

The talks in Doha, meanwhile, saw no direct meeting between the Iranian delegation and the US team, which included envoy Steve Witkoff and US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, according to Iran's state media.

Trump, however, said that the US is "getting along very well with Iran" after hitting them "very hard" last week. He claimed that "good meetings" had taken place. *—Agencies*

VP: Don't get Iran's Persian tactics

> **They'll (Tehran) say, 'No, no, there aren't peace talks ongoing, but there are technical talks between the US and Iran. It's a Persian negotiating tactic and a Persian rhetorical device that I don't understand... We care a lot less about what the Iranians say (and) more about what they do... What the President has told us is... see where the negotiation is going, and if it doesn't lead to a successful resolution on the diplomatic side, we still have a lot of options**
>
> -JD Vance, US Vice President

> **We entered Iran twice to save ourselves from destruction. There will be a third time if necessary**
>
> -Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Prime Minister

Israel no longer needs US assistance: Netanyahu

TEL AVIV, 1 JULY

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday said that Israel was working towards ending American assistance as the economy doesn't need financial help.

"I want to stop American aid. It's like welfare; I don't want it," he said. "Our economy is no longer a small economy... We can finance ourselves with this fraction of a per cent of our GDP that we receive from the US. I want this process to start this year."

The US is one of Israel's largest arms suppliers to the US. His comments come ahead of the October elections in Israel.

Meanwhile, during a visit to occupied southern Lebanon, Netanyahu said that the IDF would remain there until there was no "threat" from the militant group Hezbollah.

"These security zones are a paradigm shift," he said. "We destroy basically anything that served (terrorists)... Terror tunnels and terror villages." *—Salar News*

HIS FILINGS REVEAL

Trump made more than $1.2B from crypto last year

NEW YORK, 1 JULY

President Donald Trump took in nearly USD 1.2 billion dollars from his crypto businesses last year, a federal filing released Monday shows.

Trump got more than USD 500 million from his World Liberty Financial business selling new crypto products, including "governance tokens," according to the required annual disclosure report. World Liberty Financial is a crypto venture he and his sons co-founded. He splits the income from it with his family members.

Furthermore, the records show that Trump, alongside his three sons, utilising a middleman firm named DT Marks Defi, secured an additional 22.5 billion WLFI tokens, which hold a present valuation of approximately USD 1.3 billion. World Liberty Financial subsequently expanded its offerings in April 2025 by introducing a stablecoin, a digital currency pegged to the US dollar.

Th report also showed another crypto business, CIC Digital LLC, took in more than USD 600 million from sales of souvenir-type "Trump meme" coins stamped with his face, an asset that debuted shortly before his presidential inauguration in January 2025.

US President Donald Trump *—PTI*

- Trump got more than USD 500 million from his World Liberty Financial business selling new crypto products. The firm is managed by his sons Eric and Donald Trump Jr, as well as grandkids Alex and Zach Witkoff

The official paperwork indicates that Trump also pulled in several million dollars through equity holdings in publicly traded crypto enterprises, including the digital exchange Coinbase.

The rise of crypto relative to Trump's property is especially stunning given that traditional mainstay of his family business also grew rapidly, last year as it struck licensing deals in several countries in overseas expansion. Many of those countries were negotiating with the US over tariffs, military aid, and other important matters. *—Agencies*

Trump calls for Rep convention ahead of midterms

WASHINGTON, 1 JULY

President Donald Trump announced on his Truth Social on Tuesday that Republicans will hold their first-ever national convention on 9 and 10 September, a move seen as an attempt to reinvigorate the party ahead of the crucial midterm elections that determine who controls the Congress. Such mega-conventions are normally held only during the Presidential campaigns. Republicans only have slim majorities in Congress. If Democrats gain control of either the House and Senate, it will allow them to hamper Trump's agenda. Trump hopes the convention would help change that dynamic, and he's been talking about it since last year. The event could "show the great things we have done since the Presidential Election of 2024". *—PTI*

On CCP's anniv, Xi calls for military modernisation

BEIJING, 1 JULY

President Xi Jinping on Wednesday directed the military to speed up the goal of elevating its capabilities to world-class standards to protect China's sovereignty and development interests.

Xi, who heads the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), the military and the Presidency, made the remarks at a gathering to celebrate the party's 105th founding anniversary, during which he asked the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to accelerate its modernisation process.

He called for efforts to achieve the goals set for the military's 100th anniversary in 2027 and elevate the armed forces' capabilities to world-class standards, widely interpreted as matching the standards of the US military in weaponry, equipment and training.

He also spoke of China's "unshakable" commitment to unify Taiwan with the Chinese mainland. *—PTI*

Telugu man dies in Kansas flash floods

HOUSTON, 1 JULY

A 33-year-old Telugu IT professional was killed after his vehicle was swept away by flash floodwaters in the US state of Kansas, authorities said. Venkatesh Doppalapudi, an H1B visa holder residing in Omaha, Nebraska, was reportedly driving back from Houston on Saturday when severe storms dumped more than six inches of rain across south-central Kansas, triggering dangerous flooding.

The Consulate General of India in Houston expressed condolences and said it was coordinating with local authorities to assist the family. "The Consulate is in touch with the family and close contacts and is coordinating with the relevant authorities to provide all possible assistance," it said.

According to the Sumner County Sheriff's Office, emergency teams responded after witnesses reported a vehicle submerged near a bridge in Wellington with a person trapped inside. Strong currents initially prevented rescue operations. A multi-agency search involving the Kansas Highway Patrol Air Unit and police drones later recovered Doppalapudi's body on Sunday. The Indian mission is coordinating legal formalities and the repatriation of his mortal remains. *—PTI*

- Emergency teams responded after witnesses reported a vehicle submerged near a bridge in Wellington with a person trapped inside. Strong currents initially prevented rescue operations. A search with police drones later recovered Venkatesh Doppala pudi's body on Sunday.

Swiggy's Instamart picks Gautam Swaroop as CBO

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Swiggy-owned quick commerce platform Instamart on Wednesday announced the appointment of former OYO executive Gautam Swaroop as its Chief Business Officer (CBO). The development comes days after Hari Kumar resigned as Instamart's CBO. Chief operating officer Ankit Kumar also stepped down recently. Gautam will oversee Instamart's commercial operations spanning customer-centric growth, category management, brand relationships and expansion. Gautam brings over two decades of experience across consulting, pharmaceuticals, and technology. Most recently, as CEO of OYO's international business, he steered a portfolio across US, UK, Europe, China, and Latin America to profitability "Gautam's appointment is part of a broader strengthening of Instamart's leadership. The platform also welcomed Srikar Adavi, VP, Ad Monetisation, and Hardeep Kaur, AVP, Category (FMCG)," Swiggy stated. —*PTI*

Neon acquires Sam Altman biopic 'Artificial' rights

LOS ANGELES, 1 JULY

American independent film production and distribution company Neon has acquired the global rights to filmmaker Luca Guadagnino's upcoming feature 'Artificial'. Written by former 'Saturday Night Live' writer Simon Rich, 'Artificial' chronicles Sam Altman's dramatic 2023 exit and return as OpenAI CEO, with Andrew Garfield in the lead role. The film was shot in San Francisco and Italy. The film had been screened for prospective distributors, including Netflix and A24, after Amazon MGM exited the project. Neon has emerged as one of Hollywood's leading independent distributors, backing critically acclaimed and award-winning films, including Oscar-winning 'Parasite' and 'Anora'. According to Deadline, Neon intends to mount an awards campaign for the film in the coming award season. —*PTI*

UPI transactions ease from record high to ₹28.9L cr

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Transactions through UPI moderated to Rs 28.9 lakh crore in June from a record high of Rs 29.9 lakh crore in May, according to data released by the RBI-backed National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) on Wednesday. In volume terms, UPI transactions stood at 22.72 billion in June, down from 23.2 billion in the previous month. The value of transactions stood at Rs 28.9 lakh crore in June, up 20 per cent from Rs 24.03 lakh crore a year earlier. In volume terms, UPI transactions rose to 22.72 billion in June from 18.3 billion in June 2025. UPI is live in over eight countries, positioning India as a global leader in the digital payment landscape. —*PTI*

US removes export curbs for key Anthropic AI models

It restricted Claude Fable 5 & Mythos 5 over security risks

WASHINGTON, 1 JULY

The US government has lifted its export ban on Anthropic's most advanced artificial intelligence (AI) tools, restoring access to Claude Fable 5 and Mythos 5.

Fable 5 will become available to users globally from 1 July across Anthropic's platforms, including Claude.ai and Claude Cowork, the company confirmed. Access to Mythos 5, meanwhile, resumed for select US organisations following government approval on 26 June.

The reversal follows a directive by the US Department of Commerce on 12 June that suspended access to both models for foreign nationals under export control regulations, over concerns that Fable 5 could be exploited by hackers.

To resolve the issue, Anthropic worked with the US government to train an "improved safety classifier" that blocks the specific bypass technique in over 99 per cent of cases. The company said its understanding was that the government had become aware of a method of bypassing, or "jailbreaking," Fable 5.

"Anthropic has agreed to proactively detect and address security risks associated with the models," Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick wrote in a letter to the company seen by the BBC.

Jailbreaking is a process of getting past software restrictions designed to protect a cyber network, allowing hackers to access sensitive information or unblock features.

Anthropic said it is now coordinating with the US government to expand access to broader domestic and international partners under its Project Glasswing initiative.

India is Anthropic's second-largest market. The AI firm recently signed a deal with TCS to equip 50,000 employees with its models, and separately announced a collaboration with Infosys to deploy advanced enterprise AI solutions using the Claude family of models.

Select Indian government agencies and private firms were also recently granted access to the Mythos model under Project Glasswing, according to sources familiar with the matter.

Mythos and Fable are two of Anthropic's AI models built on its Claude platform - a rival to the likes of OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini.

Fable 5 is a version of the AI model for the consumer market, capable of deep reasoning and can perform complex tasks independently.

Mythos 5 is a version of the platform designed for businesses and cybersecurity experts. It is said to be able to identify vulnerabilities in computer code and exploit them. Both of the models were released on 9 June. —*Agencies*

AS UKRAINE WAR CONTINUES

US lifts sanctions for 4 Indian firms linked to Russia

WASHINGTON, 1 JULY

The US has de-listed four Indian companies from its Russia-related sanctions list, reversing restrictions that were imposed over allegations of supplying advanced technology and equipment to support Russia's military-industrial base.

The four companies are Hyderabad-based RRG Engineering Technologies Pvt Ltd and Lokesh Machines Limited, Ahmedabad-based Galaxy Bearings, and New Delhi-based Shaurya Aeronautics Pvt Ltd, according to details shared by the US Department of the Treasury on Tuesday.

The US had sanctioned Galaxy Bearings Ltd in October 2024, accusing it of exporting dozens of high-priority dual-use equipment, including roller bearings and roller assemblies, to Russian entities.

Shaurya Aeronautics Private Ltd was sanctioned for allegedly sending shipments of radar apparatus, radio navigational aid apparatus, radio remote control and electrical apparatus to Russia.

The US had accused RRG Engineering Technologies of sending over 100 shipments of microelectronics to SDN-listed, Russia-based Arteks Limited Company.

Lokesh Machines had been accused of sending dozens of shipments of machine tools to various Russian manufacturing companies.

Part of Washington's broader effort to curb evasion of the post-2022 Ukraine war sanctions, this de-listing marks a significant development nearly two years after the trade restrictions were first imposed.

The four firms were among 21 Indian entities sanctioned by the Office of Foreign Assets Control's (OFAC) Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (SDN) List in 2024 under Executive Order 14024.

This order targets individuals and entities accused of providing financial, material, or technological support to the Russian government. —*Agencies*

Nayara cuts petrol price by ₹5/litre, diesel by ₹3/litre

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Nayara Energy, India's largest private fuel retailer, on Wednesday cut petrol prices by Rs 5 per litre and diesel by Rs 3 a litre, marking the first reduction in retail prices by any company in more than two years as easing tensions in West Asia pulled down international oil prices.

The price cut follows a retreat in global crude oil prices after hostilities in West Asia eased and the reopening of a key maritime route restored the flow of crude oil and liquefied natural gas, reducing concerns over supply disruptions.

The revised rates have come into effect at all of Nayara's more than 7,000 fuel stations across the country, industry sources said. Actual pump prices vary across states depending on local levies such as value-added tax (VAT).

Public sector fuel retailers, however, kept prices unchanged. State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), which together account for more than 90 per cent of India's over one lakh fuel stations, did not announce any revision.

In Delhi, petrol continues to be priced at Rs 102.12 per litre and diesel at Rs 95.20 per litre at IOC outlets. —*PTI*

E-AIRCRAFT: SYLLA

Bengaluru-based air taxi startup Sarla Aviation, backed by Nikhil Kamath, completed the flight test of its electric aircraft Sylla, ahead of the planned launch of the company's full-fledged air taxi for regional and urban air mobility Shunya in 2028. "We achieved this in under a year, on a fraction of the capital," said Rakesh Gaonkar, Co-Founder and CTO at Sarla Aviation. The Sylla programme is the first in India to build and fly a 700 kg-class electric aircraft capable of vertical take-off. -*PTI*

MANUFACTURING ACTIVITY MODERATES IN JUNE: PMI

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

India's manufacturing sector activity growth eased in June, as new orders and international sales increased at softer rates, resulting in slower buying levels, employment and output, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.

The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell from 55.0 in May to 54.2 in June, pointing to the second-weakest improvement of the sector since mid-2022.

PMI measures overall business conditions. A reading above 50 indicates expansion; below 50 shows contraction.

International demand for Indian goods sustained in June, but pace of growth was modest and the weakest in 39 months amid reports of low sales to European markets.

With demand growth fading, goods producers became more reluctant to lift their fees.

Output charges rose to a moderate degree that was the least pronounced in three months. —*PTI*

MARKETS BOUNCE BACK AFTER 2 DAYS OF DECLINE

MUMBAI, 1 JULY

Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Wednesday after two days of decline amid a positive trend in global markets and fall in crude oil prices.

Sensex climbed 443.97 points (+0.58 per cent) to settle at 76,922.64. During the day, it jumped 631.41 points (0.82 per cent) to 77,110.08. Nifty rallied 140.10 points (0.59 per cent) to end at 24,005.85.

From the Sensex pack, Eternal, Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, Adani Ports, Mahindra & Mahindra, and State Bank of India were among the major winners. HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Steel, and Infosys were among the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dropped 1.07 per cent to USD 72.17 per barrel.

The BSE MidCap Select index edged higher by 0.20 per cent and SmallCap Select index eked out a marginal gain of 0.02 per cent.

Sectorally, realty rose 3.56 per cent, FMCG (1.76 per cent), services (1.35 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.20 per cent), auto (1.10 per cent), MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt (0.97 per cent) and PSU bank (0.81 per cent).—*PTI*

India's crude imports peak in June despite Iran war

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

India imported 4.93 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil in June, the highest for the month, despite tensions in West Asia, says energy intelligence firm Kpler.

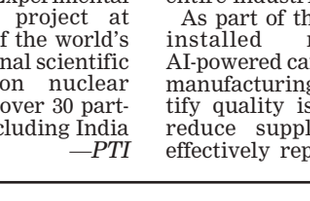
Russian crude imports rose to around 2.6 million bpd during the month, reinforcing Russia's position as India's largest oil supplier.

Russia made up for over half of the overall imports in June, up from 36.5 per cent in May (2.13 million bpd), according to Kpler data.

Russia has been India's largest crude supplier since 2022-23, as Indian refiners increased purchases of discounted Russian oil after many European buyers reduced imports following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

The record import volumes underscore India's ability to maintain crude supplies through diversified sourcing even as conflict in West Asia raised concerns over global energy shipments and briefly pushed up oil prices.

"India's crude imports have quietly demonstrated remarkable resilience over the past 100 days. Over the past 100 days, India has arguably been one of the best-positioned major importers, successfully maintaining crude inflows through proactive diversification and procurement strategies," he said. —*PTI*



Adani Green hits 20 GW renewable milestone

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Adani Green Energy Ltd on Wednesday said it has surpassed 20 gigawatts (GW) of operational renewable energy capacity, becoming the first clean energy player in India to achieve the milestone.

The company generates over 52 billion units of clean electricity annually.

The output accounts for nearly 3 per cent of India's electricity consumption, which is almost the combined electricity needs of Mumbai and New Delhi, the Adani Group company said in a statement.

The milestone has been achieved within a decade of commissioning AGEL's first renewable energy project at Kamuthi in Tamil Nadu in 2016, making it India's largest and fastest greenfield renewable energy capacity addition company.

The company added 5,051 megawatts (MW) in FY26, the highest annual renewable capacity addition by any company outside China.

AGEL's operational portfolio comprises about 14.2 GW of solar, 2.7 GW of wind and 3.3 GW of wind-solar hybrid capacity. —*PTI*

SEBI bans 221 entities for pump-&-dump op

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Markets regulator Sebi has barred 221 entities, including investor Hanif Shekh, from the securities market for up to seven years and levied a fine of Rs 10 crore for orchestrating a large-scale pump-and-dump operation in five stocks between 2017 and 2020.

Mauria Udyog Ltd, 7NR Retail, Darjeeling Ropeway Company, GBL Industries, and Vishal Fabrics Ltd were the scrips manipulated by Shekh -- the alleged mastermind in the case -- and his conduit entities, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in the order passed on Tuesday.

In its 394-page final order, Sebi found that Shekh hatched a fraudulent scheme with participation by over 200 seemingly disparate but intricately connected entities as 'PV Influencers,' 'Collaborators' or 'Offloaders' for transferring the unlawful gains to the promoters of the companies or entities controlled by him.

According to Sebi, the entities artificially inflated prices and trading volumes through synchronised trades, circulated bulk SMS recommendations to lure unaware investors and later offloaded at elevated prices. —*PTI*

FM embarks on 4-day visit to France

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday embarked on a four-day official visit to France, where she will hold a series of high-level engagements aimed at deepening the India-France Strategic Partnership.

A key highlight of the visit will be the India-France Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) at Aix-en-Provence, which Sitharaman will co-chair with France's Minister of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Energy Sovereignty, Roland Lescure, an official statement said.

During the visit, it said, Sitharaman will hold one-on-one meetings with select global chief executive officers and participate in a roundtable with leading business executives to showcase India's strong macroeconomic fundamentals, ongoing structural reforms and long-term growth prospects.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman -*PTI*

As part of her engagements, it said, the Finance Minister will visit the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project at Cadarache, one of the world's largest international scientific collaborations on nuclear fusion involving over 30 partner countries, including India and France. —*PTI*

'FAILS QUALITY CHECK'

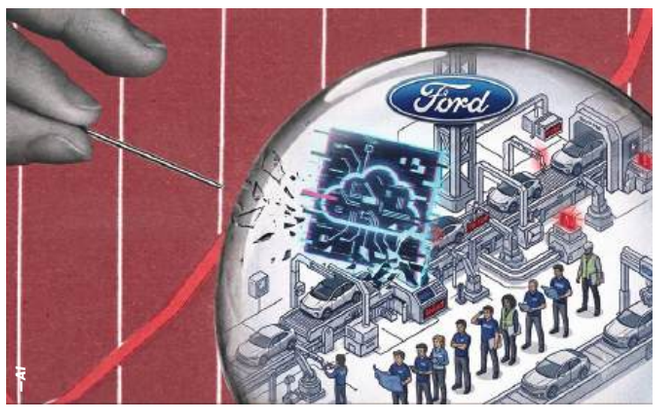
Ford rehires engineers AI couldn't replace

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

American automaker Ford Motor Companyhas recently brought back roughly 350 veteran engineers after its automated quality control systems failed to deliver expected results, according to Bloomberg.

Like many global firms riding the artificial intelligence (AI) boom, Ford had integrated the technology into its operations to cut costs and boost productivity. Following a major push in 2025, the company doubled down on AI across its entire business, with chief operating officer Kumar Galhotra stating that Ford was "deploying AI across the entire industrial system."

As part of this rollout, Ford installed roughly 900 AI-powered cameras across its manufacturing plants to identify quality issues early and reduce supply disruptions, effectively replacing much of its traditional human oversight with AI-driven inspection systems.



Executives later acknowledged, however, that they had overestimated the technology, discovering that simply ingesting design requirements did not allow the AI to replicate the nuanced judgment of its most experienced engineers, according to Forbes.

Charles Poon, vice president of vehicle hardware engineering at Ford, admitted, in an interview with the BBC, that the company should have paid more heed to the experience of its veteran engineers.

"Artificial intelligence is a fantastic tool, but it's only as good as the information you use to train it," admitted Charles Poon, vice president of vehicle hardware engineering at Ford Motor.

"Artificial intelligence is a fantastic tool, but it's only as good as the information you use to train it," Poon told the BBC, adding that Ford had not paid enough attention in previous years to the experience of its most knowledgeable engineers, who had been with the company through many product cycles.

He said these human workers had since been reintroduced to train up its systems, as well as mentor younger workers. —*Agencies*

Mbappé-led fearsome four fuels France's World Cup bid

EAST RUTHERFORD, 1 JULY

France's fearsome foursome of Kylian Mbappé, Ousmane Dembélé, Michael Olise and Bradley Barcola leaves opponents exclaiming: Sacré bleu!

"Their four up front is the best in the competition by far," Norway coach Ståle Solbakken said.

France became the first nation to score three or more goals in five consecutive World Cup matches when it beat Sweden 3-0 Tuesday and advanced to a round of 16 match against Paraguay this weekend. Seeking to reach their third straight World Cup final, Les Bleus are a favorite to dethrone defending champion Argentina.

"There is something that we cannot hide, that we have a lot of quality in the team," French midfielder N'Golo Kanté said. "But I think it's the same for other teams. We cannot see ourselves too beautiful or too strong."

After defeating the Czech Republic for the 2018 title, France lost to Argentina on penalty kicks in the 2022 final. Les Bleus are 4-0 in this year's tournament, outscoring opponents 13-2. "We always have to be more and more demanding because the opponents that we're going to face are going to be demanding," France coach Didier Deschamps said. "We need to fine-tune things and transform some negative points. Even though we didn't have a lot of consequences, we did concede two goals."

Mbappé is tied with Argentina's Lionel Messi with a tournament-high six goals after getting his third brace Tuesday. Dembélé is tied for fourth with four goals.

Olise leads with five assists, while Mbappe and Dembele have two apiece. Barcola has a goal and two assists.

Mbappé scored 18 goals in 18 World Cup games, one behind Messi's career record of 19 in 29 matches.

"I know that I do have qualities but I do have to show them on the largest stage that is the World Cup," Mbappé said.

France is using a 4-2-3-1 formation and Deschamps allows freedom to be fluid.

"They come in different positions. They're not static," Swedish forward Viktor Gyökeres said. "They know each other well in how they move and their connection between each other." —*PTI*

France's Bradley Barcola scores his team's second goal against Sweden's Jacob Widell Zetterstrom during the World Cup's round of 32 match between in East Rutherford, NJ, near New York —*PTI*

France scripts history with 5-match 3-goal streak

NEW YORK , 1 JULY

France became the first team in FIFA World Cup history to score three or more goals in five consecutive matches, continuing their prolific run at the 2026 tournament.

The milestone was confirmed by FIFA in a post on X following France's 3-0 victory over Sweden in the Round of 32.

"France have become the first team in @FIFAWorldCup history to score three or more goals in five consecutive matches," FIFA said.

A clinical double from talismanic captain Kylian Mbappe steered France to an emphatic 3-0 victory over Sweden at the New York New Jersey Stadium (MetLife Stadium), punching Les Bleus' ticket to the 2026 FIFA World Cup Round of 16.

While Sweden exits the tournament after a spirited run, France marches confidently into the round of 16, where they will lock horns with Paraguay on 4 July.

Didier Deschamps, returning to the touchline after missing the final group game due to personal bereavement following his mother's funeral, watched his side systematically dismantle a stubborn Swedish defence.

Entering the match tied with Brazilian icon Ronaldo and legendary pre-war forward Leonidas at 8 career knockout stage goals, Mbappe's strikes in the 45th and 74th minutes pushed his total to 10 knockout stage goals, the most by any player in the history of the competition.

Mbappe's knack for delivering when the stakes are highest has defined his international career. His updated goal tallies paint the picture of a player performing at unprecedented efficiency. In the knockout stage, he has now scored 10 goals, bypassing Ronaldo (8) & Leonidas (8) for the record.

Mbappe's sixth goal of the tournament drew him level with Argentinan Lionel Messi in the race for the Golden Boot. The brace also took his World Cup tally to 18 goals in 18 appearances, leaving him one shy of Messi's all-time record of 19 goals, achieved in 29 World Cup matches. —*ANI*

Salah returns ahead of Egypt's WC clash against Australia

NEW YORK , 1 JULY

Egypt captain Mohamed Salah returned to partial training as he continues his recovery from a hamstring strain, raising hopes that he could be fit for Friday's World Cup Round of 32 clash against Australia.

Salah was forced off during Egypt's 1-1 draw with Iran in their final group-stage match, sparking doubts over his availability for the knockout fixture in Dallas.

Photos posted by the Egyptian Football Association the social media site Facebook showing a smiling Mohamed Salah back on the training pitch in Spokane, where Egypt are preparing for their World Cup Round of 32 clash against Australia.

Salah's return comes as a major boost for Egypt, who have reached the knockout stage for the first time after finishing second in their group with five points, behind leaders Belgium on goal difference.

The 34-year-old has played a key role in Egypt's campaign so far, scoring one goal and providing two assists.

Egypt finished second in Group G on five points and will face Australia in Dallas to place in the round of 16. —*ANI*

Mexico beats Ecuador 2-0 in knockouts

MEXICO CITY, 1 JULY

Mexicans had learned to live with knockout-stage heartbreak — seven times, El Tri fell short here. Not anymore.

Julián Quiñones and Raúl Jiménez scored within a nine-minute span in the first half and Mexico defeated Ecuador 2-0 on Tuesday night to break a four-decade drought in the knockout stage and progress to the round of 16.

Quiñones opened the scoring in the 22nd minute and Jiménez added a goal in the 31st for Mexico, who had not won a knockout-stage match since defeating Bulgaria in the round of 16 in 1986. Mexico coach Javier Aguirre was a starting midfielders in '86.

"It means a lot to me because I am one of those who could not progress in the knockout stage," Aguirre said. "We are in the round of 16 and it is happening a great connection with the fans. We are like a family."

Mexico lost seven consecutive times at that stage from 1994-2018, didn't advance past the group stage in 2022.

Aguirre became Mexico's head coach in 2024. "We will be on high alert from until Sunday. We will try to have the players recover and we see if we are able to win again," Aguirre said. —*ANI*

TWO DIE OF SUFFOCATION CELEBRATING MEXICO'S WIN

Mexico City, 1 July: Two people died from suffocation after thousands of fans packed the streets of Mexico City, at the intersection of Hamburgo and Lancaster streets near the Angel of Independence monument, following Mexico's 2-0 FIFA World Cup 2026 Round of 32 victory over Ecuador on Tuesday the Health Secretariat said on Wednesday, as per Reuters.

"After resuscitation efforts, the deaths of a 44-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman from suffocation have been confirmed," authorities said. Co-hosts Mexico advanced to the World Cup Round of 16 with a 2-0 victory over Ecuador in Mexico City. —*ANI*

Haaland hits 25 goals in 13 games as Norway beat Ivory Coast

TEXAS , 1 JULY

Erling Haaland extended his remarkable scoring streak for Norway. With the win against Ivory Coast, Haaland becomes the first player in 72 years to score in his first 3 starts at the World Cup.

Erling Haaland extended his remarkable scoring streak for Norway, finding the net in his 13th consecutive competitive international fixture.

He achieved this feat against his side's FIFA World Cup clash against Ivory Coast on Tuesday. The goal took his tally to 25 goals in those 13 matches, as per OptaJoe.

Norway edged past Ivory Coast 2-1 in a tightly contested FIFA World Cup 2026 Round of 32 encounter, sealing their place in the Round of 16 after a dramatic late goal from Haaland.

Haaland also becomes the first player in 72 years to score in his first 3 starts at the World Cup.

Haaland added another chapter to his booming international legacy, netting a dramatic 86th-minute winner.

The high-stakes Round of 32 clash delivered end-to-end drama, culminating in the Manchester City striker capturing his 60th goal for his country and extending his historic World Cup goal-scoring run.

With the win, Norway advances to the Round of 16, while Ivory Coast exit the tournament after a spirited performance.

It was a historic day for Ivory Coast, as they were playing their very first World Cup knockout match.

Meanwhile, Norway will now lock horns with Brazil in the Round of 16. —*ANI*

Ecuador coach steps down after World Cup exit

MEXICO CITY, 1 JULY

Ecuador coach Sebastián Beccacece has stepped down as coach of Ecuador following World Cup elimination.

The 45-year-old Argentine confirmed it after Tuesday night's 2-0 defeat to host Mexico.

"My contract has to end with the end of the World Cup. For us, we are leaving now," Beccacece said. "I believe the dressing room is full of brotherhood. I'm taking the love, respect, commitment and admiration from the boys, from this group of warriors, the Ecuadorian national team."

Beccacece was in charge for two years. He led Ecuador, which was making its fifth World Cup appearance, to the knockout round for just the second time after a memorable win over four-time champion Germany in the group stage.

After that match, Beccacece climbed up from the field to embrace his wife and other loved ones."When we started this journey there wasn't much hope... But we made it, we exceeded expectations," he said. —*PTI*

Indian men's doubles pair exits from Canada Open

MARKHAM, 1 JULY

India's men's doubles pair of Achutaditya Rao Doddavarapu and Pochana Arjun suffered a first round exit from the Canada Open badminton tournament here after losing in straight games here. The Indian duo went down 9-21, 7-21 to fifth-seeded home pair Kevin Lee and Ty Alexander Lindeman in just 23 minutes in the opening round of the BWF Super 300 event on Tuesday night. India's campaign will gather pace on Wednesday with fourth seed Kidambi Srikanth opening his men's singles campaign against Malaysia's Paris Olympics bronze medallist Lee Zii Jia. Aakarshi Kashyap Devika Sihag, Anmol Kharb Tharun Mannepalli, Saneeth Dayanand and Tanya Hemanth will also begin their respective campaigns. —*PTI*

Serena 'enjoyed the moment' despite 3-set loss at Wimbledon

LONDON, 1 JULY

Serena Williams made an emotional return to Wimbledon after nearly four years but bowed out in the opening round, losing 6-3, 6-7 (6), 6-3 to Australia's 20-year-old Maya Joint on Tuesday. The 44-year-old, cheered on by her two daughters, received a standing ovation as she left Centre Court after her first singles match since the 2022 US Open.

In a statement released by Wimbledon organisers, Williams said, "It was really great to be back at Wimbledon. I never expected to be here. The atmosphere was amazing." She added that she relished every moment of the occasion.

Despite the defeat, Williams showed flashes of her trademark power, serving above 120 mph and dominating rallies with heavy groundstrokes. However, her movement proved a challenge as Joint handled the pace and won the crucial points.

Joint said facing Williams was unforgettable. "She has such an aura, she's just a legend," she said, adding that playing on Centre Court against the American was a dream she had cherished since childhood. —*PTI*

APOLOGISES FOR REMARKS

KCA lifts 3-year ban on Sreesanth

T'PURAM, 1 JULY

The Kerala Cricket Association (KCA) on Wednesday lifted the three-year ban it had imposed on former international cricketer S Sreesanth last year for alleged defamatory remarks against the organisation.

The KCA took the decision to lift the ban in its special general body meeting held during the day, a statement said.

"It was unanimously decided meeting to lift the ban. At the same time...strict disciplinary action will be taken if he repeats such actions," it said.

The decision was taken based on the unconditional apology submitted by the cricketer.

The ban was imposed on Sreesanth prior to the Kerala Cricket League (KCL) matches last year after he allegedly made defamatory remarks against the KCA. He allegedly made false and derogatory statements against KCA in connection with the controversy over Sanju Samson's omission from the Champions Trophy Indian team.

During a televised discussion, Sreesanth allegedly pledged his support to Samson and vowed to protect him and other Kerala players, while accusing the KCA.

His remarks came amid criticism of the KCA for dropping Samson from the Kerala squad for the Vijay Hazare Trophy, which may have affected his chances of being selected for Champions Trophy team.

After the KCA ban, Sreesanth had claimed that all he did was express support for Sanju.

Subsequently, he had moved a munsiff court challenging the KCA's decision, but his plea was rejected.

With the lifting of the ban, Sreesanth can continue as co-owner of the KCL team Aries Kollam Sailors in the third season of the League, it added. —*PTI*

24 TEAMS, INCLUDING SEVEN DEBUTANTS, TO FEATURE IN DURAND CUP

KOLKATA, 1 JULY

The 134th Durand Cup will feature 24 teams, including seven debutants, with matches across Kolkata, Ranchi, Imphal, Shillong and Guwahati from July 25 to August 23. Kolkata will host the opener, final and key knockout matches at Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan and Kishore Bharati Krirangan. Ranchi will debut as a host, while Imphal, Shillong and Guwahati will host league game and knockouts. Debutants include Sri Lanka's Defenders FC and Meghalaya's Nongkseh SS&CC. The tournament features ISL, I-League, Services, domestic and overseas teams. Defending champions NorthEast United FC will also play. —*PTI*